based on control of the instincts and a certain poise. The eighteenth century in France and England achieved very little in tragedy because of its lack of humanity in the sense indicated. It was first "rationalistically" naturalistic and then later increasingly emotionally naturalistic. After it came the nineteenth century with a scientific naturalism, in which Nature, in reaction to the sentimental view, was found to be "red in tooth and claw"; but tragedy was not there either—pathos, yes indeed, but not tragedy. This period ends with the Great War, in which scientific naturalism may well have reached its zenith. There was pathos in full measure, but no tragedy, and the millions who perished, in the greatest massacre of history, only seemed to deepen the impression of the littleness of man.

There remains as a period of naturalism the Italian Renaissance, which, although it was the equal of the Elizabethan for color, movement, and for its profusion of great characters, nevertheless produced no tragic drama. Jacob Burckhardt, in his famous history of the Renaissance, alleges several reasons for this which it would be superfluous to bring forward here, but he does not suggest what I think to be the true one. As is well known, the religious side of Italian culture, as based on Christian dogma, had been undermined as early as the age of Frederic II through its intimate contact with dissolving elements from the Near East, the Mohammedan religion, etc., and Eastern philosophy. The rapid development which followed in the fourteenth century in a turbulent and luxurious city life, free from any final authority, royal or imperial, led to a view of life and human actions which was practically "amoral", and based, like that of many European States in later days, on purely economic, *i.e.*, natural, grounds. The amoral actions of the Italians, moreover, were the actions of individual men acting in their own interests, and did not even have the sanction, which diplomacy has, of service to its country, with the result that, as a spectacle, it is merely sordid. The men of the Italian Renaissance do not therefore present suitable material for a tragic outlook, because, in the last resort, they have no ethical outlook and no standards of value. Liberated from the outer check of religion, they developed too fast, it would seem, and too individually, to be able to form an inner check of the Greek type. The final outcome was the Spanish tyranny and the Roman Inquisition. A glance at Machiavelli—which does not mean that Machiavelli *himself* was not highly ethical in his own ideals—will suggest at once to the reader the impossibilities of a tragic outlook on life in the Italy of 1500, and not so much because the Italians were immoral, since immorality can imply its opposite, but because they had no standards at all. There were exceptions, as in the case of Michael Angelo; but Michael Angelo is not typical of Italian life as a whole, and for a tragic outlook there must be not merely a creative writer, but also an audience which comprehends the standards which are put forward.

It remains to consider the possibility, or impossibility, of tragedy on the religious plane, and here, once more, it must be remembered that the different levels are not clear-cut and distinct, but may, and do often, overlap. The Jansenist Pascal is a typical representative of the life on the religious plane, and he is responsible for some famous comments on the dignity and grandeur of man, one of which has been quoted. In general, however, the religious outlook, by its very emphasis on humility, tends to undermine the dignity of man, and, where it is the life everlasting which is in question, it follows that a breakdown in earthly life cannot be of a moving nature. For the true Christian there has only been one breakdown, and that was so stupendous that the martyr's death at the stake is child's play and a toy thing in contrast. But what could indeed contain an element of tragedy, were it possible to dramatize it, would be the spectacle of a soul

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

losing salvation, and it is interesting to note *en passant* that this very spectacle has been presented to the vision of man in the *Inferno* of Dante. There the figure of Virgil, Dante's guide, is, in a sense, the most tragic personality in the Middle Ages. With his human personality fully developed—for he lives intensely, like all Dante's creations, and with the keenest of ethical outlooks, for he is among those who desire blessedness and know they will never get it—Virgil is forever cut off from the life in Paradise. He is a kind of negative tragic hero, for he suffers, as he himself somewhere says, "not for doing, but for not doing", and while the ethical scheme which condemns him is not of him, he none the less accepts it. This would not suffice, and does not suffice, to make him a tragic hero, but it makes him at least the representative of the tragic feeling in the Middle Ages.

And now, as regards the problem of tragedy in ages which are generally accepted as possessing it, it is hardly necessary to draw attention to the dualism and to the dignity of the men who represent it. The tragic heroes of these ages act ethically, that is, with a deep sense of right or wrong action, and on this sense their dignity is based. To act ethically does not mean that they act well or ill according to any given set of moral precepts, Christian or otherwise, but it does mean that their actions have an aim which presupposes standards, and standards which are more or less universally appreciated in the age they represent. "They see life steadily, and they see it whole", as Matthew Arnold once said of the Greeks; but in this sense it applies not only to the Greeks, but to all of the finest tragic writers. It applies to Shakespeare at his best no less than to Sophocles, and to Racine no less than to Shakespeare. A few illustrations drawn from each age will perhaps serve to make this point clear.

In the case of Œdipus, of whom it was prophesied that he would slay his father and wed his mother, we have a typical example of tragic dignity and human worth. Œdipus, knowing of the prophecy, tries by all means in his power to avert it,* but fulfils it almost precisely because of the means he adopted, and breaks down in the end, overcome by the destiny which had ranged against him the forces of the world. Yet at the end of the play the spectator does not come away from seeing it with any low opinion of Œdipus, but rather the contrary. Œdipus has played his part like a human being, and suffers at the end as men may have to suffer. If we imagine a nineteenth century play on naturalistic lines, with economic force taking the place of the Greek *anangke* (fate), as in the *Strife* of Galsworthy, we shall find that the tragic hero has considerably less dignity, if any at all, and the reason is that the hero is felt *to be on the same plane as the forces which overcome him*. The Greeks do not seem to have felt that Œdipus was on the same plane as the fate which destroyed him. They admired Œdipus and they did not admire *anangke*. Realists as they were, they saw that there was a world-order in which man was enmeshed, and no friendly one. But man was man, after all, and his ruin a marvellous spectacle. Again, in the *Antigone* of Sophocles, Antigone suffers death by the hand of the king because, in defiance of the laws of the State, she buried, with the proper funeral rites, the body of her brother who was slain. She acted humanly, as Œdipus had acted humanly. The ethical outlook in Antigone is more subtle than in Œdipus because here there is an ethical circle within a circle. Ismene, her sister, acting ethically, will not help to bury her brother because the king—*i.e.*, the State—has forbidden it, and the State is to be obeyed. Antigone, also acting ethically, but according to the law of Greek religion, which she places above the law of the king, buries the body and suffers the penalty prescribed by the State. The end

* Notice that Œdipus, contrary to a widespread but erroneous conception of Greek tragedy, acts quite *freely* from beginning to end.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is tragic. Antigone has to die, but she is "noble" and her death is somehow inspiring.

Nearer to the Greeks than Shakespeare is Racine, and his *Phèdre*, one of the best of his plays, is apposite to our problem. Under Greek names Racine gives a picture of a woman in whom there is a strong element of Jansenism. Burning with incestuous love for her son (stepson) Hippolyte, she tries to crush it and tries to hate him, even persecuting him to prove her hatred. She is at the point of death when the influence of her nurse, and the reported death of the king, her husband, lead her to an avowal of a love, now no longer incestuous, to Hippolyte. Her remorse is terrible, and the sense of lost value deep, when, in scornful rejection of her advances, he turns away. Again she would die, but the return of Theseus, the king, who is not dead, coupled with the growing influence of the nurse, lead her still further. She lets the nurse accuse Hippolyte to Theseus of having loved her. Theseus, in anger, calls down the wrath of the gods on Hippolyte, his son. Again stricken with remorse, she would have interceded, but the sudden discovery that even the chaste Hippolyte has a lover fires her to jealousy, a passion she had not yet known. She allows Hippolyte to perish, only then to find she cannot endure the remorse; finally she confesses and kills herself. It has been said that Phèdre was a Jansenist *"à qui la grâce avait manqué"*! She slips, step by step, into deeper crime, conscious the while, as the spectator is also conscious, of a deep sense of value. Half of her is animal, and the will of the human half is weak, but she knows when she is doing wrong and, because she has an ideal which she cannot reach, she is acting ethically and is on the human level.

Shakespeare, no less than these, has a tragic hero who is human. Hamlet is not moral at all, as Bowdler once saw clearly, but he is ethical throughout. He thinks too much and too long, but his very "pondering on the event" is the mark of man, and he leaves us, like Œdipus and Phèdre, with no sense of depression, or of the lowliness of men. Nor do the passion-swept heroes of Shakespeare, the Macbeths and the Othellos, ever give the impression that passion is all of them and that there is no inner check there at all. In this the age of Elizabeth is on a higher level than that of the Italians, the Iagos are in the minority, and the ruin is on the human level and not on the naturalistic.

It may be objected that the tragic problem is here only treated from one point of view, and that, in addition to the aspect of human dignity, there are many others, such as the necessity of positive action on the part of the hero, the problem of *katharsis*, of the fear and the pity of Aristotle. This is quite true, and it might be added that some of the problems, such as the relation of Stoicism to tragedy, which have been discussed, could have been further developed. The Stoic ideal is unsuitable for tragedy, for example, on the side of action. The Stoic ideal was to suffer rather than to act. The answer to this is partly that a naturalistic view of human life is bound to lead finally to passive acquiescence, but more in that the point under discussion is mainly to connect human dignity with tragedy, or to show its relation to the humanistic plane of Professor Babbitt, and this has been done now sufficiently.

There remains one point to be mentioned, and an important one. Professor Babbitt himself is not specially concerned with tragedy, and his aim is largely to put forward a philosophy of human life by showing the weak points of romantic psychology. His theory of the classical view of life is that the reason working through the imagination and controlling the emotions can and should "see life steadily and see it whole". This, as we have seen, Shakespeare and the Greeks achieved, but the Romantics failed to achieve it because with them, the reason being at a discount, the imagination became linked up with the emotional desires and produced a *pays des chimères* of the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heart's desire, of which examples are the idyllic "nature" of Rousseau and the belief in a "natural" brotherhood of man. All this is true, and it is the reason why the Romantics failed to produce a tragedy worthy the name. But, on the other hand, Professor Babbitt's attack being social in aim, and its purpose being to attain the stability of society and good government, there seems to be in the end a somewhat bourgeois flavor about it. He argues in favor of humanism for the sake of stability of society, which is an undoubtedly sound argument for it. Nevertheless, there is a greater argument even than that, and it is the argument of humanism for the sake of human dignity. itself and the "worthy man" of Aristotle.

The tragic writers cannot conceivably be imagined as writing for any such end as the stability of society. The world seems, moreover, to have been considerably more stable under Marcus Aurelius than under Pericles, and in the eighteenth than in the seventeenth century, but the world, all the same, owes more to the humanistic than to the non-humanistic periods. It is at this point that one of Professor Babbitt's arguments has greater force perhaps even than he has given to it—the argument, namely, that in the infinite flux of the Many the great writers saw the abiding element of the One, as Plato saw the immutable Idea and Aristotle the last immaterial Form. It is because of this gift of insight that the tragic writers still live, and that the One they saw is something that still abides in the Many we have around us to-day. It is because of this that a problem which troubled Sophocles, the relation of the individual to the State in the figure of Antigone, recurred almost on the same lines in the Great War in the figure of the (genuine) "conscientious objector", and its recurrence was noted at the time. It will occur again, no doubt, till the world ends. It is because of this, lastly, that Aristotle's famous dictum, "Poetry is more philosophical than history", is one of the truest ever pronounced.

It is not so much that humanism tends to the greater stability of society that makes its worth abiding, but that it tends to the greater dignity of man. It does the former, no doubt, but it is the latter, and its grandeur rests on the visible truth that the world is fundamentally at all times out of harmony with man, and a lower creation than he. Because of this the tragic outlook is that the world is and will be at all times so fundamentally non-ethical that human beings will be always liable to break themselves and be broken in their attempt—and it is a noble attempt—to put their "ethical" values into it, and this no "stable" society, unless its stability be that which springs from human unworthiness, will ever prevent. It is said that the world was stable at the time of Christ, but there are many who would maintain even now that a tragedy occurred then more awful than any in history, and yet a tragedy, curiously enough, that they would by no means do without, but rather, from a certain point of view, rejoice in. This may seem going beyond the point, but in a less intense degree the great tragedies of the world likewise are events which we would not by any means be without, and the reason must be, surely, that they represent some element of Oneness in the human spirit. It is in this sense that humanity knows no "progress", and a well-known phrase of Goethe finds a meaning:

> *Alles Drängen, alles Ringen*
> *Ist ewig' Ruh' in Gott dem Herrn.*
> (All striving, all struggling
> Is eternal peace in God the Lord.)

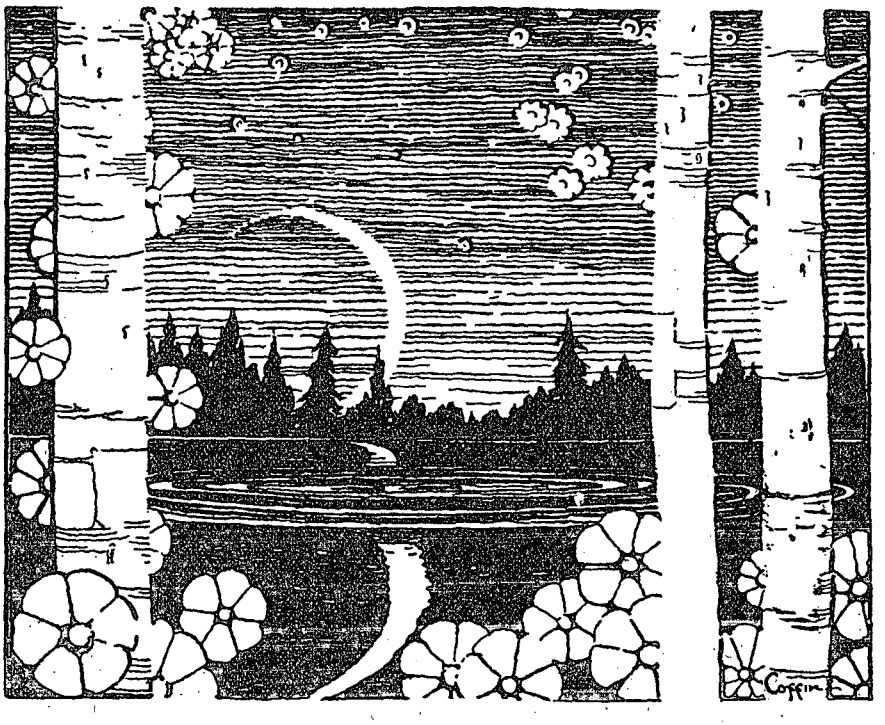
for Goethe, himself a humanist in later life, saw that there was for man no real peace except in calamity. The error of the Romantics was that the struggle was not seen by them in the "peace" that lies in the center and that is found in the struggle with reality, but in an imaginary conflict with a reality of their own fashioning.

If it be asked in conclusion how it comes about that different ages of naturalism and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

humanism occur, the reply is that in view of the "progressive" increase of human knowledge and of the "progress" of man in general man needs at various times to make a renewed effort of the will in order to regain the humanistic level and to preserve himself from the naturalism which new science tends to bring about. So the discoveries of the Greek fourth, fifth and sixth centuries ended in the "naturalism" of the Roman Empire and a sinking of human dignity, while the discoveries of the Renaissance ended in the naturalism, scientific or sentimental, of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the case of the Italians it resulted in naturalism earlier, as we have seen, and for its own peculiar reasons. Whether in face of the naturalism of today a humanist attitude is possible remains, of course, to be seen. The humanist plane of life is not in opposition to the religious, and it is not impossible that in a synthesis of the two the humanist life may have a future. The concepts of Nemesis and of God are both the objective aspects of a similar attitude towards the universe, for both insist on an ethical fabric where Nature not only gives us "things" or "events", and both point to a One which is above the Many. It is in this "numinous" sense, and not in the sense of the sophist, that "Man is the measure of all things", and the highest purpose of life may lie in the seeing of this One that is behind the Many.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



HYLAS

by Robert P. Tristram Coffin

When hylas flute along the creeks
In April dusks the crystal speaks.

Quick, insistent, silver cries,
Sudden arrows of replies,

Shrill and high, beyond the brain,
Beyond the rhythm of the rain.

Leaping light comes not so far
From the farthest panting star.

It seems as if one heard the sound
Of wheels that turn all space around,

Through clean holes let in the sky
One heard great music hurtle by.

Tiny horns in rapture so
Can shake down death like Jericho.

These are the winged and secret powers,
The voices of the future flowers.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OSCAR WILDE'S UNWRITTEN PLAY

by T. H. Bell

I was the intermediary—selected by Oscar Wilde himself—in the collaboration arranged between him and Frank Harris for the production of Wilde's last play.

The continued and increasing interest in Wilde, a period in which I have the necessary leisure, and certain recent events of which I became aware lately (such as, for instance, the publication of a play in New York representing Lord Alfred Douglas as the evil influence which ruined a great but weak man) have stirred me up to write, while Harris is still alive to contradict me if he thinks the thing unfairly presented, the true story of that "collaboration"—a story which only two or three know and which I alone, apparently, am willing to tell.

The truth of my more important statements will be made manifest by the story itself.

I was introduced by Frank Harris to Oscar Wilde, in Paris, only a few months—three or four, perhaps—before Wilde died. I was interested, of course, to meet a man whose work I had much admired; Harris said some nice things about me; Wilde was very courteous; there was an hour or so of conversation; then I went off with a French literary man who had also been present. Thinking I should not see Wilde again, I took the opportunity, before going, to tell him that I felt honored by his acquaintance. My compliment was couched in conventional terms, but I saw that Wilde understood it for what it was meant to be—an assurance of respect and a respectful attempt at encouragement.

Two or three days later, however, I met him again, in the rooms of Frank Harris in the Elysée Palace Hotel. I had to put before Harris reports and proposals in regard to two companies in the Riviera in which he had invested heavily; Wilde wanted some money from him; Harris was a very busy man, much occupied in other matters; he apologized, therefore, and asked us to keep each other company till he was free. Naturally I was glad of the chance.

On the previous occasion I had realized that the tales of Wilde as an extraordinary conversationalist were quite true; the play of wit and humor when he met a man like Harris, who as a conversationalist was second to Wilde only, was sparkling indeed. I, as younger man and a much humbler person, had taken, I need hardly say, a very small part in the conversation.

On this second occasion Wilde seemed to be bent on bringing me out; his manner was even more friendly than before. He had, indeed, on the first occasion brought me into the talk once or twice; but I had understood that to be merely good manners. I had appreciated it and had understood better why Wilde was liked so much in spite of his faults. But it was surely not mere courtesy now; Wilde was quite cordial, and Wilde's manner when he laid himself out to be specially pleasant was charming indeed.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I thought at first that Harris must have said more nice things about me after I left. But no, there was in Wilde's manner something more than mere civility towards the good friend of a good friend: there was cordiality. Yes, there was cordiality; but, say, was there not something in it besides cordiality? Could it be that there was amusement? Perfect courtesy, of course, but wasn't he chaffing me?

It dawned upon me what had happened.

When, on the first occasion, I had gone off with the Frenchman he had taken me with him for an evening with some of his fellow *littérateurs*. We had a most enjoyable time. Naturally, the name of Wilde had been brought up, and, as usual, the Frenchmen had scoffed at the "Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy" which had ruined such a poet. Comparison had been made between Wilde, the man of genius, and his opponent at law, the Marquis of Queensberry, a vulgar pugilist, but a lord, and the father of Alfred Douglas.

Now as an undistinguished person in the company of established men of letters I might have done well to hold my tongue, and had they dealt merely with matters of esthetics I am sure I would have done so; but, thank heaven, a man is not the descendant of Scotch Presbyterians for nothing, even in Paris; and on a matter of morals, yes, by thunder, I would have my say—and I had it! A father, I maintained, was entitled to take active measures when he saw his son wasting his life in idleness and extravagance.

My French friends were friendlier than ever, but, alas for my dignity, they were merrier, too. I had to go on; and I wanted to anyway. The descendant not only of Scotch Presbyterians but of radicals and rebels I nevertheless had within me still some sentiment for the blood of the Bruce and the Douglas. Even if the good lance of the Douglas had now become but boxing-glove, in Paris I was still a Scot. I had once spoken in a friendly way with Queensberry, and to hear him referred to now as a coarse and vulgar ruffian, who was listened to only because he was a lord—why, to have let that go without protest would have seemed to me cowardice and desertion! I had to go on—and on I went.

When quite a young fellow I was on my first visit to London from Edinburgh, and I called at the office of the *Agnostic Journal*, edited then by W. Stewart Ross. There in the office I had a talk with a pleasant and well-read gentleman who told me that he knew Edinburgh and then discussed with me some of the views which we held in common. It was Queensberry. He contributed substantially to the paper, in money as well as in matter, I believe. Later I heard of him, particularly in matters of sex radicalism, as ready with bail, with his carriage, with his personal support, whenever some stupid prosecution of serious thought or good literature was threatening. So far from being the rather ruffianly sporting man which some of Wilde's friends would make him out to be, he was a man of intellect and ability, so decided in his views that never once was he able to secure election as one of the peers sent to the House of Lords from Scotland—he, head of the Douglas family, the oldest, the most historic, the most romantic in Scotland's story!

So I had to put my French friends straight in regard to Queensberry. Queensberry, I took care to remind them, did not start the action against Wilde: it was Wilde who brought about his own ruin by starting action against Queensberry.

My French friends had not only listened to my defence, they had thoroughly enjoyed it. And now it sank into me that Wilde's attitude was the same as theirs. Some one of them had seen Wilde and had given me away.

I have some very ugly things to tell about Wilde. To most people, even those without Presbyterian ancestors, some of his conduct (putting aside, as I did, as something quite aberrant, the matter in regard to which the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scandal arose) must always appear so disgraceful, indeed so contemptible, that it is difficult to think of such a man retaining the liking of anybody. I will tell this story in detail because it may help to show why he was liked. It is evident that there must have been something at one time, if there was not much of it left in his last period, that drew to the man those good friends who stood by him. His ingratitude to his friends was notorious; perhaps my story may show that he could be generous about his enemies. For I believe that my defence of his opponent, which might have made a pettier man angry or even spiteful, had disposed him in my favor.

One thing of another kind cropped up in our conversation which made me pretty sure that he had been given the tale. He mentioned *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*. I had spoken of it in the discussion with the Frenchmen; they had not heard of it before. Wilde was too much concerned with esthetics to concern himself much with economics, too full of wit to deal seriously at any length with any social question. Nevertheless, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* was in its day a striking piece of work. In its time it was bold and original.

Harris had told Wilde that William Morris, Peter Kropotkin and Edward Carpenter had honored me with their friendship. Wilde evidently had a great admiration for Morris and, so far as he can be said to have political opinions, it can easily be seen that they were akin to Kropotkin's. Carpenter, in *Love's Coming of Age* had written just before the Wilde scandal some articles dealing with the "Urnings", as he called those people whose sexual feelings drew them toward people of their own sex, explaining it much as the psycho-analysts have done so elaborately since, pointing out that they were not always brutal and disgusting, but often people of real social value, and appealing for a more humane judgment of them. Wilde had evidently read that appeal and spoke warmly of Carpenter.

Finally, there was still another matter which may have something to do with Wilde's friendliness towards me—though I did not know anything about it till just recently.

I had been acquainted slightly with Lord Alfred Douglas. Douglas has been savagely attacked by some people who call themselves Wilde's friends. Wilde himself appears to have behaved towards him abominably. There is now in the British Museum, to be opened sixty years from the time it was given in, a statement of Wilde's, understood to be an attack upon Douglas. Douglas claims, with very good reason, that he ought to have an opportunity to reply to any charges made against him. It does seem to me outrageous that long after a man is in the earth, when even his children, perhaps, are gone, statements should be given out against him which he might have been able to disprove.

I know nothing personally of the affair. Until recently I was never aware that there had been a break between Wilde and Douglas. I know nothing of their relationship beyond the statements that have been published.

I had liked Douglas. Before I met him Harris had shown me a letter from him replying to one in which Harris had urged him to retrieve his good name by volunteering for the Boer War. Douglas had replied, declining in a way that struck me as sensible and manly. I had met him afterwards casually. My impressions of him had been very favorable; he seemed straight, frank, generous; I had noticed him once in a matter of small importance but of real spontaneous kindness. He has reached at least once or twice the heights of English poetry. In my opinion no statement of Wilde's against him ought to be taken seriously. I would take his word against a wilderness of Wildes. Wilde at the time I knew him had nothing left in him of responsibility, truthfulness or common honesty. Robert Ross, who put the attack into the British Museum, was himself well aware of that ingratitude; I have heard him speak of it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At that time, however, I was not aware of any break between Wilde and Douglas. My recollection, very dim now after all these years during which I attached no meaning to the matter, is that the name of Douglas did come into the conversation I had with Wilde. I am sure that Wilde knew my good opinion of Douglas. And I prefer to continue thinking that in spite of the fact that in writing the attack upon Douglas he committed a black act of treachery, in spite of the fact that even after the mood had passed (as I suppose it did) he had never taken the trouble to undo it, some little remnant of decency predisposed him to friendliness towards one of Douglas's friends.

Whatever the explanation may have been, Wilde showed himself very friendly, and it was that friendliness that brought me into the affair of his last play.

I have said that Wilde came to get some money out of Harris. Harris had helped him when he came out of prison; they had always been good friends. But Harris's circumstances had altered; when he had given money to Wilde before he had had plenty of it, even for his own extravagant expenditures; now he was beginning to find himself in serious financial difficulties. It was in connection with two of his speculations which had gone wrong badly that I was in Paris to see him. Harris always needed a lot of money for himself, so when Wilde pressed him again for assistance, Harris naturally urged him to write his play. Everybody knew about the play that Wilde had in his mind.

Wilde had had an excellent dinner and much good wine. He did not want good advice, he wanted money; from the style in which Harris was living he thought, no doubt, that Harris had money enough. Anyway, his reply was: "No, Frank, I shall never write that play; take it and write it yourself; I give it to you".

Was he, in that matter, a little like the polite Latin who when you praise something of his says, with a fine flourish, "It is yours!" giving you, of course, an opportunity for an equally fine refusal to take advantage of his generosity? Harris did not accept the offer, but made a counter-proposal of collaboration. I suspect that Wilde, if he thought of it at all, saw a long luxurious period spent in Harris's company, with Harris paying for dinners and drinks. He accepted.

There was quite a lot of talk afterwards about the play. Wilde had not written one word of it and he told it differently every time he told it. But always as I heard him tell it, it seemed to me to be his best play.

Harris was enthusiastic over it, but he could not stay in France. The plan finally decided on was that Harris should go back to England and write the second and third acts; Wilde promised to buck up at once and write the first. Both together were to tackle the fourth. And I was to be the go-between. No writer myself, I loved literature; my judgment was thought good; I could get on well with both men; my job, I understood, would be to argue for each man against the other, to arrange the concessions and the compromises without the heat that might arise from personal friction.

Well, I went back to England with Harris, and he started to work on the play with high enthusiasm. Every morning I went to his house, took his dictation and typed it out to be read over, criticized, touched up and retyped. He accomplished in record time what he had undertaken—the second and third acts, doing an excellent job.

Now, according to the terms of the agreement, I ought to have been sent off to Paris with these two acts for Wilde's criticism and acceptance and to see what could be done about that first act. Nothing had been heard from Wilde: we knew quite well, of course, that he had not started. By this time, however, Harris's finances had gone from bad to worse. He did not like to lay out the money for fares and hotel bills. Anyhow, the manuscript was merely mailed. It brought back a letter from Wilde, an angry letter. He ob-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jected that at the close of the second act Harris had gone on after the climax—had introduced an anti-climax. Technically it was true. But it had been done so well that in my opinion it was worth keeping in. His criticism of the third act was that Harris had made the leading man indulge in a long soliloquy and Wilde objected to the soliloquy as a stage convention altogether out of date —in which he was clearly right.

II

Had I been the go-between, any harshness of indignant criticism between the two writers, I need not tell you, would have been toned down as occasion required. Strong disagreement and the strong expression of such disagreement on Wilde's part were inevitable. Harris, too, was notoriously hot and domineering. Still, with a good buffer to take up the shocks, I believe they could have worked together successfully. But as soon as this hot criticism of Wilde's reached Harris, he, too, went up in the air. If Wilde could write the thing better, why the devil didn't he?

Instead of that, Wilde wrote nothing at all. Not even that first act. Not one word. That first act, especially, was to be Wilde's—you know the kind: the light society talk, rich with wit and epigrams. Harris felt, I know, that he had done well in the second and third acts; he did not want to tackle that first one; he knew that he had not in him that light persiflage. It was only because nothing came along from Wilde that he finally wrote it. To my mind he did it well. The wit was not Wilde's, the talk was enriched not by bright sophistries but by bitter satire; but it was a good piece of work of its kind.

Wilde had not done the work he had undertaken; Harris had done his share in full and on time; if Wilde had "given" Harris the scenario Harris had put enthusiasm and hard application into it; he felt that now he had a right to go on and obtain a return for his labor; Wilde would be given his half of the proceeds whether he actually wrote anything of the play or no. Quite so. According to the letter of the law Harris was in the right entirely.

But Wilde, whose letters now became very bitter, commented angrily upon Harris's idea of "collaboration". The three of us all knew well enough what had been understood when the matter was first talked over. If Harris had really wanted Wilde to write the first act he should have gone over to France himself, or if that was not possible have sent me or someone else who was qualified to get hold of Wilde, sober him up and get him out of his usual haunts and off to some quiet establishment far from his companions and the cafés. There he might have been coaxed or pushed into sitting down to work or to some pretence of work; the stuff, such as it might be, could have been typed and presented again for amendment. He should have been kept encouraged and from getting drunk too early in the day, kept in good humor. He should, in short, have had a combination nurse, guardian and amanuensis. It would have required a great deal of tact, patience and sympathy. It is possible enough that with all of these it might not have succeeded. But in no other way, as all of us knew, was there a chance of getting him to write anything.

It is obvious that if he could be expected to sit down in his Paris hotel, without any alteration in his life, to write the first act, there was no occasion for collaboration at all; the second, third and fourth acts would have followed. Harris, hard up, may not have been to blame very gravely, but it is true that, once engrossed in the work, he bothered not at all about Wilde and made no effort to bring him into it. And Wilde's indignation, I think, was very natural.

Another source of trouble was that when Wilde spoke angrily of "theft" he did not come into court with clean hands, as Harris was finding out to his consternation. Wilde had "given" the play to Harris; but he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had previously sold it to more than one party who had paid him good coin for it. In the midst of his financial difficulties Harris had had to buy off Leonard Smithers, the publisher, and Kyrle Bellew, the actor, to both of whom, at different times, Wilde had sold the play.

Harris, in his own mind, had no choice. He had been working on the play to win. He hoped to make money out of it, enough to set him up again for a while till he could make another fortune in stocks. But the anger and the plain speech of Wilde had affected him. So far *he* had written the play, all of it himself; he decided, rightly or wrongly, that it could be produced on the London stage at that time only without the name of Wilde attached to it; he had continued the second act after Wilde's climax and wanted to keep it as written; there was, he said now, not much original in Wilde's scenario after all; in short, about this time he began to think of it not as a play made up by Wilde but as a play written by Harris.

So far, though the language was all his, he had kept closely to the framework provided by Wilde. But in the fourth act, as he proceeded to write it, a new development appeared, and it became entirely different from that which Wilde had had in mind. It may be that Harris was not conscious of his own motives. Freud since then has revealed to us how a man can be activated by motives of which he is not aware. It may seem incredible that a man with the extraordinary ability of Frank Harris as a literary critic should really have believed that he was bettering the play by the changes in the last act of which I will tell you—changes which destroyed the whole meaning of the play as conceived by Oscar Wilde and threw his skilfully designed framework to the ground. I myself could not understand the matter at all in those days; now I think of Harris, flustered by his quarrel with Wilde, annoyed by Wilde's claims and annoyed by the claims of others on Wilde's play, vain of the good work he had already done on it, which, it seemed to him now, he could have done just as well without any scenario from Wilde and without sharing either the glory or the money with him; and I think of Harris as moved sub-consciously to accept without critical examination such changes as presented themselves, "forgetting" the original idea of Wilde's play, just as people readily forget other unpleasant things. Anyhow, as Harris wrote the fourth act, it became an entirely different play.

Wilde's own indignant letter to Harris when he received the manuscript of that last act read: "You have not only stolen my play: you have spoiled it".

Let me give you now at last the story of the play. Whether Wilde was justified you shall judge for yourself.

In the first act we have a society scene in the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Daventry, with chattering women and clever epigrams, serving mainly to introduce the characters. Mrs. Daventry is young, intelligent, cultured and idealistic. Daventry is older, a good bit, strong, athletic, a sportsman, cynical, though not without brains; a man enjoying life, with hearty appetites, proud of his beautiful wife, but with a quick eye for any other fine woman. Mr. Lancefield, a younger man, tall and slim, quiet, modest, not so definite in character, is an old friend of Mrs. Daventry. The act winds up with some talk between the two men in which Daventry speaks of being a little short of cash and Lancefield willingly offers him a loan and passes over the money. "Thanks, my boy."

The second act is in the library at Daventry's later in the evening. Mrs. Daventry comes in tired and depressed. She first sits, then lies down on a couch, the lights turned low. In comes Lady Somers, the "fine woman" Daventry has had his eye on in the first act. Daventry comes in after her. They do not notice Mrs. Daventry in the dim light, lying half-concealed by a screen. Lady Somers has been in some financial difficulty and Daventry has promised to help her out, as she

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dare not let Sir George know about it. Daventry tells her he has the money. She is relieved, submits to a little love-making; takes the money eagerly, then becomes terribly nervous. Daventry continues making love, but it is evident that all she is concerned about is to get away in safety. And then, a knock at the door. (Daventry before starting in on his love-making has locked it.) "My husband! It's my husband. What shall we do?" She looks for a way of escape; there is none. The knock again, loud and imperative. There is no way out; they are caught. The voice of Sir George, stern and determined: "Open the door; I know my wife is in there. If it is not opened I will break it down".

Now at the critical moment, up rises Mrs. Daventry before the startled pair. She glides to the door and opens it: "Why, of course, Sir George, come in if you will". Sir George is taken aback at the sight of her. He can hardly believe his eyes and ears as she continues acting the cordial hostess. He has come in with cold, cruel, concentrated anger, sure that he had caught his wife; he apologizes lamely, takes his wife on his arm and retires.

That was the end of the second act, as imagined by Wilde. Curtain here.

But Harris kept the curtain up a little longer for a scene between Mr. and Mrs. Daventry.

Daventry looks around, caught, embarrassed, made to feel a fool, but with a bit of admiration for his wife. He attempts to laugh it off. "You did that well, old girl. By Jove, you were cool. When I looked at him standing there——", and so forth. No answer. He tries again. No reply. As she passes out without speaking to him, he grumbles: "Women never can be generous!"

In the opening of the third act we have Lancefield in his own rooms, soliloquizing. He has always been in love with Mrs. Daventry. But he is younger than she; he had appeared, even to himself, just a boy beside Daventry, the man of strong character, going after what he wanted, who had carried her off. She has now left Daventry. Lancefield is troubled and distressed, and he is finally deciding to go abroad out of the way.

Enter Daventry. They have always been good friends. No quarrel. The younger man just a little embarrassed. Daventry admits he has behaved badly. His wife had reason to leave him. Cannot understand why he has been such a damned fool.

He does not know where his wife is. He wants to get in touch with her to persuade her to come back, and promises good conduct in the future.

Lancefield is doubtful. Hesitates. They argue. Daventry points out the difficulties of a woman alone. (Don't forget he is speaking of the world twenty-five years ago; it has grown just a little bit easier now.) But let her come back and she will never have another occasion to complain. Lancefield is silent. Daventry continues: "If she does have it, well, will she be any worse off then? She commits herself to nothing, coming back, you know; she is simply giving me another chance".

The younger man evidently is not quite convinced, but the elder one wins, finally. Lancefield promises to convey the message. They part with a handshake.

(Well played as this was in Mrs. Campbell's production, the psychological struggle between the two men let the audience see Daventry in a better light—a man behaving badly, but fond of his wife in his own way, a strong and able man shown at his best. He wins the audience much as he wins Lancefield.)

Almost immediately after his exit, in comes Mrs. Daventry. She and Lancefield talk, and the young man brings in awkwardly but honestly Daventry's proposal. Mrs. Daventry is excited and very angry. No, she will not go back. She has acted after careful reflection. She will not go on ruining her life to no purpose. She is sure of but one life to live; it would be childish weakness to continue wasting it. This was *not* the first affair. "Forget it, John; talk no more of it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Change the subject. What about yourself? What are you planning? Why all these trunks? Where on earth are you going with them all?" John explains lamely that he is going to Africa. "To Africa! Why in the world Africa?" More of John's confused and lame explanations. Explanations rejected. "John, tell me the truth; were you going to Africa to get away from me?" John surrenders. Tableau.

Fourth act. At the Cesari Palace Hotel in Monte Carlo. (Harris *would* make it a hotel in Monte Carlo, because he owned a hotel there and thought it might help business.) Daventry has not yet done anything to divorce her. They have been happy. But there is something in Lancefield's manner which makes her uneasy. "What is the trouble? Don't deny it, John, I see it plainly; there *is* something the matter." Gradually she brings it out of him. Yes, it is Daventry. He is on their trail. The tale is that he has been denouncing Lancefield as a liar and a thief, as a man who cultivated a husband's friendship to steal his wife, as a man who pretended sympathy and made promises while all the time he had arranged to go off with her. Daventry is threatening all sorts of things.

So far it has been pretty much as imagined by Wilde: I will give you now the rest of the act as written by Harris.

It comes out at last: Daventry has sent Lancefield a challenge to a duel. "But you will not fight him, John, you must not think of fighting him, you cannot think of that!" "My dear, what can I do? I must." "What, don't you think about me?" "My dear, I cannot refuse: do not ask me." Scene of affection, but in the end Lancefield goes forth to meet his enemy, and Mrs. Daventry is left in great distress.

Enter Daventry. She is startled, but faces him. He has meant to be calm but he does not succeed. She replies boldly. He recovers himself. He had not meant to reproach her. He had meant to talk calmly. He knew well that he had been in the wrong. But why hadn't she given him another chance? Hadn't he always given her everything she wanted? She defends herself. She entered into her marriage full of love and ideals, and he had deliberately destroyed them. He replies: "I told you what the world was, yes. But am I to blame for the world? I did not make it". But she will not go back; she is going to stay with the man she loves. "You prefer to stay—a kept woman?" She will stay with the man she loves and she is going to be the mother of his child.

At this he loses his temper completely, and as he goes off he swears that if he meets that cur, her fancy man, he will shoot him down like the dog he is.

She is left terrified. If he meets him! Why, they are bound to meet! What is she to do? What is there that she can do in time? Any moment now may be the moment in which they meet!

A shot!

She sinks. Too late! "While I shrunk back my lover was walking to his death."

And what is there left for her now? He is gone, who made up life for her. She should have rushed out and thrown herself in front of the murderer!

Then in comes—Lancefield. She throws herself in his arms. But after the relief: "That shot! But Daventry? Who fired the shot?" "He shot himself, my dear. Yes, he is dead." "He shot himself! He shot himself! Ah, he was better than we thought." In Mrs. Campbell's production she kneels to pray.

I will give you Wilde's version in a minute; perhaps as I am writing for adult and educated people I need hardly point out that Harris's version is utter balderdash.

Englishmen in our day do not fight duels, and a healthy man, a sporting man not too fine in his sensuality, with money, position and lots of other women in the world, though he may suffer because his wife will not come back to him, does not commit suicide. Daventry goes out in a furious rage at the other fellow, and shoots—himself! Tut-tut!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Better than we thought!" Why, we never thought him a coward, nor a fool, nor a weakling! We did not say that he was a brute because he had an eye for a woman or two besides his wife. But we cannot think of him as a sensitive fellow, greatly misunderstood, slaying himself for unrequited love and leaving the way clear for the man he has just been furiously denouncing!

When Mrs. Daventry finally hesitates, evidently doubts the morality of her course, and appears succumbing to remorse, the whole meaning of Wilde's play is lost; it becomes mere melodrama, much like the conventional stuff produced in mass by the movies for the morons.

To get the meaning of Wilde's play, to understand its importance, you must keep in mind that Wilde thought of it for the English world of twenty-five years ago, for that England in which a woman could not get a divorce for infidelity alone, that England of Victoria with all the conventions still in full force.

Mrs. Daventry was a modern woman of her time. She was not held back by the religious taboos of her grandmothers; fully mature, she looked at her life deliberately and deliberately decided not to waste it. She was strong enough to break through the conventions of that day. Why should she be conscience-stricken? When in remorse she turns to pray, the play becomes silly. Think of Wilde's other plays and this one becomes incredible.

Harris, it is true, did not write in that bit about Mrs. Daventry turning to pray, but he allowed it to be put in without making any effective protest. No wonder Wilde was bitter.

Compare now that version with the true one.

The couple are on the Continent, not at Monte Carlo, but at some quiet resort, living out of the way. Daventry hitherto has not known where they were; but Lancefield has heard that he has now found out about them, at last is hunting them down. He is reported as swearing he will make the dog fight (which is not at all the same thing as challenging to a duel). He declares that the affair must have been already arranged at the time of his interview with Lancefield.

This is very unpleasant news, but when Mrs. Daventry, disturbed greatly, proposes that they should again take flight and try to get away from him, Lancefield refuses. It would look like cowardice; he must stay and face it out. There is another reason why they cannot go on running all the time—the child which is to be born. She is inclined to press him just because of that reason, but he begs her not to insist. He admits Daventry may turn up at any time, but he will have to be faced. So he goes out for his walk, leaving her afraid and alarmed.

Daventry appears. The scene then is much as in the other version, but immediately he is gone she throws on her cloak, ready to warn her lover. But where did he go? She rushes to the window to look down the valley. No sight of him. She turns to the corner where he keeps his alpenstock to see if he has gone up the mountain. No. Where then can he have gone? "And I am losing time here while that madman is hunting him down! Oh, where can he have gone?"

Another thought strikes her. "No, no, I must not be foolish: I must take care of myself now; I must be calm and think. He could not be going far. Perhaps he has not left the building. Must I after all do nothing, wait inactive here while danger stalks outside?"

She realizes that there is nothing to be done, and throws herself on the couch to wait, trembling in terror.

Then comes the shot!

She springs up shrieking, wildly reproaching herself that in her hesitation and cowardice she has allowed the murder of her lover. A chambermaid comes running along the veranda, screaming. Mrs. Daventry seizes her. "What is it? What did you see? Who is it? Tell me, tell me! Tell me what you saw!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That English gentleman in No. 8, the new gentleman, he has shot another gentleman in the hall."

"I know. I know. But is he only wounded? Is he wounded badly?"

"He is dead!"

"Ah, I knew that too! He is dead! Dead! Dead! I knew it would be so. I knew he would not live to see it."

She turns to recover herself, hanging on to the mantelpiece.

Lancefield enters quietly and soberly, walks over to her and puts his arm gently around her.

"Oh, John, John, can it be really you?" She throws herself into his arms. "I thought you were dead. Oh, John, my dear John, you are still alive, aren't you? I thought I heard a shot. And the chambermaid said—Why, John, that *was* a shot, wasn't it? It was. Oh, John, who is dead? Is it——?"

"Yes, it is Daventry."

"What, did he shoot *himself*?"

"No."

"John, oh, John dear, did you have to shoot him? Did *you* shoot him, John?"

"No."

"Who fired that shot, then?"

"Sir George Somers."

Ah, that's different. No changes in the psychology this time. The whole story knit together closely, the end bound up with the beginning, the fourth act tied to the second. The play growing stronger from the start to the finish. The last three words bursting like a bombshell. Daventry has been angrily threatening death for the offence of another; he has gone out with the death sentence on his lips—to meet with it like a thunderbolt out of the sky for the same offence of his own.

You who have read Wilde's other plays, forget these halting phrases which are so hopelessly inadequate to represent the language Wilde would have used; smile, if you will, at my presentation without one grain of Wilde's wit and humor; remember, if you think this play too tragic, that he himself had been through a great tragedy; do not regard too critically the minor incidents which after twenty-five years, with Wilde's own variations to help mix me up, I cannot reproduce consistently; "the play's the thing"; compare the two plots and say which one is Wilde's.

Harris took the play, with excellent judgment, to Bourchier who was acting for Mrs. Patrick Campbell, then at the height of her career. In due time it was presented, as "Mr. and Mrs. Daventry, by Frank Harris". It was rumored widely at the time that it was Wilde's play and its first night was well attended. The critics were very curious, obviously much interested, but not too enthusiastic. Harris, in bed with bronchitis, was unable to attend. I had to tell him that I myself was much dissatisfied. I had not been to any of the rehearsals, and the presentation was a shock to me. The first three acts had been effective; the acting was very good indeed. But that last act, why, it was a travesty, it was a caricature of the play as Wilde had imagined it, as Harris had had it in his mind when he began to write it! I did not conceal my chagrin. Harris declared that I was too much concerned with the literary value of the play; he had had to get some money out of it, he said, and had had to alter it accordingly. Mrs. Campbell had insisted upon its being altered still more at the rehearsals; and it was evident, from what I told him, that she had altered it yet again in the production.

I went to Mrs. Pat for him, to argue with her about those changes. Mrs. Pat was very gracious; she admitted her own disappointment; but she maintained that the "stuff" was not in the play; in the actual production it had become evident that there was not in it what she had hoped; frankly, she had had to do the best she could to make it go.

But though Mrs. Pat could not find the "stuff" in the play she was game. With some minor alterations, with the play ren-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dered rather more risqué than had been intended, she managed to keep it successful for six long weeks. It made money, and Harris got out of his immediate trouble.

Wilde, of course, demanded his share and kept on demanding it. He needed it badly, no doubt. Harris, who had broken with him and was indifferent to his reproaches, having produced the play in his own name, with the credit (such as it was) his own, did not feel any need to hurry. Wilde was to get his share of the proceeds; but Harris had to deduct first of all the money he had paid or promised to pay to Leonard Smithers and to Kyrle Bellew. Harris, when he had had plenty of money, could easily be generous towards a distinguished man like Wilde; when there was not quite enough for Frank, Oscar's impassioned demands did not cause Frank to lose any sleep.

In the book in which Harris professes to tell the truth about Wilde he says that he had wanted to send money over to Wilde but that "his friend Bell", who was to take it, had been suffering from asthma and could not go, and so the money was delayed. That is not true. The money was delayed, but not from that cause. Friend Bell suffers from asthma badly enough; but never so badly that when any desperately important thing has to be done he cannot do it. When Harris came to my house and asked me when I could start with some money for Oscar, who was ill, my reply was "As soon as I can put on my hat". After receiving the money, I went off by the next train. Harris had received a wire telling of Oscar's serious condition and suggesting that if Harris had any good word to send, now was the time.

Before I went Harris warned me. I might, he said, find Oscar was well as ever, "ill" merely till some money came along. The telegram had been sent by someone whose name Harris did not recognize—"some parasite, probably". I must give the money to nobody but Oscar himself. If I found Oscar's illness a humbug, I was to talk things over with him, show him the documents in regard to Bellew and Smithers. If I found him drunk I was to hold the money till I saw him sober. Get his signature for it. Yes, surely, I was to use my own judgment a bit. But I must be aware of the people around him, parasites and blackmailers. I should be sure to go directly to Oscar's room (Harris somehow had the number of it) so as not to give him any chance to stage a sickness.

These warnings disheartened me not a little. Harris knew Wilde certainly much better than I did; and, alas, I knew enough myself to realize that these suspicions were not unreasonable. But I was being disillusioned about Harris, too. I felt that poor Oscar had been treated very badly.

Wilde's hotel was in a dingy street near the Beaux-Arts, a third-class hotel, a fourth-class one, perhaps. Keeping in my mind the admonitions Harris had given me, I went in by the side entrance and, coming across a woman cleaning there, asked her as if casually where number so-and-so was. She seemed startled, stared at me curiously, but gave me the information. Immediately I went up the stairs. Yes, the next one must be it. The door was ajar. Ha! Had Harris been right after all and was Wilde as well as usual and away on his usual rounds of the cafés? I stepped in at the open door to see. A white-coiffed nun was sitting at one side with candles burning before her. And there before me lay Oscar—dead.

The landlord presented himself. Wilde had died two or three hours before my arrival. For some reason he took me for an agent acting for the "family". Wilde owed him quite a sum, and he was nervous about it. But he spoke of his guest with a feeling which I could see was quite genuine; Wilde, when he wanted anyone to like him, knew how to set about it. Indeed everybody in the hotel, I believe, had liked him. (The landlord, I am glad to say, was ultimately paid.) Later in the day the two men who had been with Wilde in his illness came back. Some of the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

warnings I had received from Harris may have showed in my face, for I remember that after I had told them who I was we remained rather cool and reserved to each other, till I gradually saw that I had not to do with blacklegs or hangers-on but with men who had been with Wilde because they were really his friends. One of them was Robert Ross. I have forgotten the name of the other. But shortly afterwards a friend of my own, Henri Davray, came in, too, and assured me that all had been done for Oscar that could have been done if the money had come earlier. I did not stay for the funeral. I had rushed off without considering the consequences when it had been a question of talking over what was needed by a dying man; now that he was dead I had to hurry back without delay to my responsibilities.

Two days later a little group, one that could have been checked off on the fingers, accompanied on his last journey the man who at one time was followed admiringly by a great multitude, and handed him over to the forgiving earth, which, when at last we return to it, no matter how we may have distinguished or disgraced ourselves, accepts us all alike.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROBERT BRIDGES

by Odell Shepard

A very old man is sitting in his garden on a huge hill that overlooks the towers of Oxford. He sees before him the dim blue waves of the Chilterns, and behind him is drawn out the bolder blue of the Berkshire Downs "with lovely undulation of fall and rise", a landmark and refuge to him since his childhood. Sweeping up to his very gate there is a noble wood of oaks and beeches where nightingales are voluble under the May moon and where the bracken stands head-high in August. Surrounded thus by the tranquil English beauty he has always intimately known and has done more than any other to interpret, he has the look of one whom Fortune has greatly favored. Ranging back over the memories of his long life, he acknowledges her benefits graciously, not without a sense that she has shown discrimination in her choice of a favorite. He is glad for what has been, he is keenly interested in a thousand aspects of the present, and he faces without dismay toward the mystery that lies for him and for all of us no great distance ahead. On most days of high midsummer pomp he is content merely to gaze down at the come-and-go of colored lights on the college towers two miles away, to hear the hum of bees in the flowered sunshine, and to watch

> the dance of young trees that in a wild birch-spinney
> toss to and fro the cluster of their flickering crests.

He has always had a gift for lordly indolence, and there are really few pleasanter things that one with a mind so stored as his can do than simply to loiter and gaze—at any rate after one's work in the world is done. But now he is writing a poem. For what reason, it might be hard for him to say, but certainly not because poems are any longer expected from him nor to increase a reputation already as secure as he could wish. He does not write to amuse or to edify the general public, for which he has no liking and little respect. He writes, one guesses, chiefly to please himself, to employ an art in which he has won ease and freedom after subjecting himself for a lifetime to all restraints and disciplines; most of all, he writes by way of self-exploration, to lay forth his whole mental treasure and see what it amounts to. We can faintly imagine what must be the joy of writing when the mind is rich with learning, when memory reaches back more than eighty years, and when one has the skill to phrase without great effort the subtlest shadings of thought and mood. We can fancy the delight of pronouncing judgment at last, after seven decades of learning, upon the world and its contents—the satisfaction that there is in saying, with all the emphasis that extreme age and assured fame can lend: "Thus life looks to me". And this poet has reserved the particular pleasure he is taking now until the summit of the years was reached, whence he could look down on the widest spread of country.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He has never written anything like this poem before. Hitherto he has been a poet only; now he plays the sage.

Perhaps it would have been as well if he had remained merely a poet to the end, for his thought has never been profound and is not so now; it has always required the support of his nearly consummate style, and where this support is withdrawn, as it is occasionally in the present poem, the effect is not inspiring. Yet he writes on day after day, often wearily, often drowsily, but sometimes too with a steady glow of poetic enthusiasm. The task he has set himself would exhaust the will and mental energies of a poet half his age, and the faith he everywhere shows in the ultimate triumph of Beauty and of Spirit is such as we expect to find only in very young poets who have not yet taken the world's slow stain of disillusionment. How can he maintain that faith while looking down at Oxford, the beauty of which has been sullied in his time almost beyond a son's and lover's recognition? What is the secret of his hope and health, that make him younger in many ways than the youngest of his poetic contemporaries?

That question will take some looking into —but our present concern is with his growing poem. He has a scheme for it, a discussion of what he calls Selfhood and Breed derived from a violent wrenching of one of Plato's metaphors, which looks at first more impressive than it finally turns out to be, but wherever his lines attain poetic elevation and intensity they are concerned with the theme of Beauty and with its steady upward pull upon the hearts of men. Determined at all hazards to justify the ways of Nature toward Man, he diverts the famous metaphor of the Charioteer in the *Phædrus* from its dualistic intent and imposes upon it a sense of monistic naturalism—as perhaps we might expect a lifelong student of natural beauty and natural science to do. He wears his naturalism, however, with a decided difference, for he sees in Beauty the tireless guide that brings us back from our wanderings and entanglements in the ways of the flesh to the world of Spirit, our true home. This is the pith of his poem—this assertion that we can accept without dismay or sense of loss the most apparently devastating conclusions of science, provided only that we do not lose hold of the clue of Beauty. Here we have the utterance of a poetic faith, never more needed than in our time. Most of those who find help in it, however, will do so not because it is poetic but because it does not blink the facts; it is also the faith of a physician, a modern *Religio Medici*.

From an old poet pleasing himself with the drift of his own thoughts and fancies it would be unreasonable to expect the rigor of logic or severe rhetorical construction. The beauty of this poem is in the parts rather than in the whole. It contains perhaps the most powerful passage ever written in praise of flowers, and half a dozen lines that reach farther toward the mystery of music than words have ever gone before. Here, as very often in his earlier work, the poet has really profound things to say about Joy and Love. Over and over he shows that in spite of his learned devotion to the past he can give the youngest poet lessons in modernity, in audacity, and even in occasional obscurity and dulness. At last, when he has said all that occurs to him for the time being, he rounds to a close, and dedicates his lines to his King—one of the very few contemporaries, one imagines, to whom in any sense he has ever looked up. The strange, proud, miscellaneous poem may take its chances now with the critics and the professors. As for the poet, he returns to his roses, to the colored lights on the Oxford towers, and to the sound of the wind through his pine trees.

The chorus of acclaim that has greeted *The Testament of Beauty*, a philosophic poem in four books given to the world by the Poet Laureate of England on his eighty-fifth birthday, may have been occasioned partly by the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wish of English and American critics to make up for lost time and to atone for decades of neglect. One hears it surmised that this poem may turn out to be "the *De Rerum Natura* of our Christian civilization", and one sees the assertion that it is "the most veracious and thrilling . . . poem about man, time, and eternity since *The Prelude*". On the other hand, one hears it vigorously condemned as "a shapeless mass of rhetorical commonplaces, containing hardly an idea that was not already hackneyed in the time of Plato". Time and re-reading may suggest modifications of these admiring or hostile enthusiasms, but in the meanwhile they can do no harm and they may do good by directing attention to the earlier work of the most accomplished poet now writing in our language. So large and various a poem as this is not to be estimated by any critic within a year of its appearance. It is a vast soliloquy poured forth without readily discernible order in a rich and rapid utterance—a harvest home of thoughts for the most part abstract, too frequently obscure in expression and clouded by metaphysics. The verse often bristles with cacophonies that one had supposed Robert Bridges, master of euphony as he is, incapable of perpetrating. The poem violates nearly all the orthodox expectations of poetry: it is the reverse of simple, sensuous, passionate, and it distracts attention from important matters by oddities of spelling, punctuation and diction that seldom justify themselves. At its worst it reminds the reader of a dull professor who has succumbed to his own bad habits of speech and has ceased to care about being understood. Tested either as verse or as expression, this passage, for example, is grotesquely bad writing:

> All terrestrial life, in all functions and motions, operateth thru' alliance of living entities disparate in their structure but logically correlated in action under some final cause.

There are hundreds of lines in the poem quite as dreary as these, and no admiration for the man who wrote them should persuade us that they are admirable. The best one can say of them is that no other good poet alive would dare to write and publish such bad verse; but also one may and must point out that they are counterbalanced by passages of a nobility such as no other living poet and few poets of the past could have attained. And whether he likes *The Testament* or not, no adequate reader of it will deny that it conveys somehow an unquestionable effect of power, much as the poetry of Donne or of Dante does even to those who do not enjoy it. There is weight of intellect and character behind this poem; it has the accent and timbre of a great voice. In spite of its manifest defects, it shows us that we have still with us a poet of major importance—one whom most of us have hitherto regarded as pallid and chilly and minor.

It is true, of course, that the work of Robert Bridges has been intimately familiar for a long time to a little clan of readers on both sides of the Atlantic, and that he has never lacked such ardent and vocal admirers as Laurence Binyon in his own country and Robert Hillyer in our own. In a recent plebiscite taken by the London *Observer* his name stood first on a list of fifteen favorite contemporary poets, that of Walter de la Mare standing second; but even this does not show that he has penetrated the public consciousness in the way that such lesser verse-makers as Masefield and Kipling have long since done. Our critics are responsible for this serious error and loss—a loss not so much to Bridges, who does not care what the public thinks of him, as to ourselves. Another error of precisely the same sort has been made with regard to the only contemporary English poet who should be named in the same breath with the Laureate—Sir William Watson. We shall continue to make such blunders until our criticism outgrows its puerility.

The reasons for our mistake about Robert Bridges—for there are reasons, if not excuses—are significant both of him and of us. His

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mind is not contemporary, though full of contemporary interests, but it strains away from the present into the past and future. His reticence, really a mark of intellectual good manners, has been misread as coldness. He has shown himself indifferent to contemporary fame in a time of self-exploitation. He has been wholly unsentimental and undemocratic in a poetic epoch best represented by the warm though thoughtless social sympathies of Walt Whitman. Worst of all, he is an artist. To make himself one has been his almost exclusive concern for more years than most of our poets have lived; and indeed literary history provides few examples of such prolonged and concentrated devotion to the technique of verse. If Robert Bridges is not a poet of high rank, it is not for lack of steady effort and high aim, of scholarship, or of tireless training. We suspect, in fact, that he has these in super-abundance, and one of the unexpressed but most damaging charges we bring against him is that he so clearly and incontestably knows what poetry is and has been, and how it should be made. We feel in reading him somewhat as we do in reading Leopardi, that he is too much a scholar and critic and thinker to be a wholly satisfactory poet, and the fairly obvious fact that he is the subtlest craftsman in English verse since Milton does not help him at all with those who hold that poetry should be nothing but the "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions".

One might sum up nearly all the qualities of Robert Bridges that unfit him for popularity in our day by pointing out that he is aristocratic in mind, character, taste, social theory, and even literary style. His reaching backward and forward in time is a search for his intellectual peers. His restraint and self-discipline and reticence are dictated by a code unknown, and therefore hateful, to the children of the low-bred Rousseau. His apparent coldness, so perplexing to those who derive from the Romantic tradition all their notions of what a poet should be, is traceable to a proud disdain of facile emotionalism—a disdain not unlike that of the French Parnassiens, or that of the Gentleman in any time or land. His indifference to contemporary fame is due in part to his contempt—no weaker word will serve—for the public mind of our day as he sees it. Every reference in *The Testament of Beauty* to the "herd" and the "crowd" is winged and barbed with aristocratic disdain. In the mass of men, he says, "there is little good to hope for but what instruction, authority, and good example impose". The mind of most men, he affirms, "is gross, and the spirit bleak". These remarks, and a score of others of the same tenor, are not calculated to cajole our egalitarian prejudices, nor are we at all accustomed to being addressed in this way. Robert Bridges has never taken any chances of becoming popular.

During a period in which the most representative poet has been Walt Whitman, the apostle of shuffle and sprawl and warm wet wallowing, the Laureate has maintained according to his abilities the standards of the poet who was born at Mantua just two thousand years ago. Whether he himself is or is not a great poet, this means at least that he belongs to a great line—a fact of which he is well aware. His poetry and thought are mulched with tradition; they are rooted not in recent decades but in old centuries. The complaint that there is "nothing new" in *The Testament* is therefore exact in statement and beside the point, the poet's purpose having been to say not new things but true things, and the older the better. What he says is seldom his discovery, and he would probably distrust any idea for which he could recall no literary source or analogue, because he knows better than most contemporary poets do how old the world of thought now is and how crowded the past has been with minds as good as the best of ours. Bridges writes with the strength and assurance that come of partnership with mighty associates, and from that partnership he gets the tone

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of authority that rings from end to end of his latest poem.

Something, however, must be allowed for the extraordinary good fortune that has followed him throughout his long pilgrimage. A happier life than his, at least to outward appearance, it would be hard to discover in the history of literature, or even to imagine. Except for fifteen years of medical practice in London, his life has been lived in the country. His boyhood home in Kent—described after seventy years in "Kate's Mother" with wonderful precision of detail—lay within sight of the sea and of the Downs. He knew the Duke of Wellington. He was educated at Eton and Oxford. As stroke of the Corpus boat he fought his way to the head of the river. At the age of forty he was able to retire to the lovely Downland village of Yattendon, and twenty years later he built his home on Boar's Hill looking down upon the lilac and lavender glory of Oxford. His home is in the heart of the district made classic by Arnold's "Thyrsis" and "The Scholar-Gipsy"—two poems which, as he once admitted to me, "contain several good lines". Here he loiters and dreams, reads widely in most European literatures, drinks good wine —we should like to think that it is supplied from the royal cellars according to the contract made long ago with Ben Jonson—watches birds and trees and flowers and skies, and walks the country lanes, a very tall alert spare figure, still handsome and athletic. His face is full of weather as a countryman's should be, yet it is the face of a patrician, compact of Selfhood and of Breed. There is little that does not interest him, whether in art or philosophy, in nature or science, and at eighty-five he is still our foremost poet of Beauty and Love and Joy.

A fortunate life, indeed, and such music as the world has had from Bridges has by no means been made by the pressure of his heart against a thorn; yet even for this apparently pure gift of the gods one has to pay. The ample leisure that has enabled the poet to perfect his art may not have been entirely favorable to his poetry. There might have been no less of country contentment in his verse and a good deal more of human nature if he had not shut himself up so long ago in a Palace of Art. There is a lesson in that great poem by a former Laureate that he would have done well to ponder. Instead of doing so, he wrote these lines somewhat after he had left his medical practice in London:

> And country life I praise
> And lead, because I find
> The philosophic mind
> Can take no middle ways;
> She will not leave her love
> To mix with men, her art
> Is all to strive above
> The crowd, or stand apart.

We may gladly acknowledge, of course, that Bridges has kept himself poetically alive, as Wordsworth did not, during his long country residence. Modern conditions of travel have made this more easily possible, and to these we must add the poet's proximity to Oxford and his association with such men as Henry Bradley, Gilbert Murray, Sir Walter Raleigh, and the wandering scholar George Santayana. Yet for all this he has known too little of life's give-and-take, has had too little social criticism, and he has therefore come to feel rather naïvely that almost any idea entering his mind gains thereby a certain dignity. How otherwise to explain the garrulity of certain long and dull passages in *The Testament* I do not know. It is true that intellectual isolation is almost forced in our time upon a mind of daring and distinction, but Robert Bridges seems to have chosen deliberately what he could not have wholly escaped. His isolation has confirmed him in those very peculiarities which, as a follower of the great tradition, he should have avoided; it has probably narrowed and dwarfed the human interest of his work, so that we may plausibly attribute to it the fact that his masques and dramas, for all their many passages of lyric intensity, are somewhat pallid

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and remote; his long seclusion, finally, may have fostered in him an aristocratic pride which, though indispensable to a young poet in a world that cares almost nothing for poetry, is less becoming in one who has had ample time in which to grow humble.

But here is enough of faultfinding. One prefers to speak of the sanity, the health, the large normality that pervade the Laureate's writing from end to end. Passion enough there is in him, as those who know "The Growth of Love" do not need to be told, and it has been ignored through no fault of his but merely because it is concentrated and controlled rather than explosive. Although he has never sought for novelty either of subject-matter or of style, he has always been an experimenter—most obviously, in versification; and here he seems to become steadily more audacious as he grows older. It is true that he has found no new topic, for he has never thought such discovery any part of the poet's business, but he has written more wisely about Love than any man of our time, treating it always as a holy thing. If there is little ecstasy in him there is an abundance of the quieter and more durable emotion which he calls Joy. Finally, he is one of the most intensely English of poets, at any rate since the time of Drayton and Daniel and William Browne. The southern counties of England have never been so freshly and precisely painted, with such a wealth of fond knowledge, as they are in his work.

The Testament of Beauty, for all its impressive bulk and scope and its many passages of power, will scarcely change the opinion of Robert Bridges's admirers that his best performance is in the five books of *Shorter Poems*, completed thirty-six years ago. Although Bridges has not loved the world or the world him, he has given us in these ninety poems a treasure of which we have yet to show ourselves worthy; and his pride, if nothing better, has prevented him here from admitting a line that is below his best. Each of these poems seems to have been distilled word by word, syllable by syllable, like the better Odes of Horace, so that the reading of them is a discipline in taste for us all and the young poet can do few things better than to learn them by heart. In these poems Robert Bridges extended the great line to which he belongs, he justified his good fortune, he gave the best possible excuse for his aristocratic pride by doing the work of an aristocrat, and he earned long ago the acclaim that is now tardily coming to him.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE FACTS OF LIFE

A Series of Parody Biographies by H. W. Hanemann

WITH SKETCHES BY HERB ROTH

VI. VISH

Mary Roberts Rinehart Saves Queen Victoria's Crown Jewels

It all had its initial impulse in the copy of the *Pink 'Un* that our dear Alexandrina Victoria Wettin found in the red sitting-room at Buckingham Palace. How it got there, I haven't the faintest idea. Vish, to my knowledge, has never subscribed to that crass publication at any time, before or since. Things, however, do get into the palace. There was, for instance, the snapping turtle that crawled out of Vish's work-basket biting Aggie severely before it could be removed. I myself suspect the carelessness of Vish's man, John Brown, whom she has to bring up the coal, run errands and exercise her pug dog, Wellington. Brown is a Scotch Presbyterian, an excellent person in many ways, but he is inclined toward the strong waters of his country, which he insists are medicinal and prescribed for him by his doctor. There are those who hint that it was a deliberate plant by Mr. Disraeli. Goodness knows his fantastic behavior is capable of anything. I do not approve of him.

At any rate, when Vish, Aggie and I came upstairs after dinner, there was the *Pink 'Un* lying negligently on top of a presentation copy of the *Idylls of the King*, an autographed copy of *Jane Eyre on Wuthering Heights* and an advance copy of Vish's own *Leaves—Second Series.*

"What is that disgusting thing?" said Vish, picking up the *Pink 'Un* on the spot. Her eye lighted upon a paragraph. Though not in juxtaposition to the telephone, she exclaimed "Hello!" and read to us the following item:

CROWN JEWELS IN DANGER

It is rumored on excellent authority that an attempt will be made shortly by Russian agents to remove the crown jewels from the Tower of London. It is sincerely to be hoped that this dastardly plot will not succeed.

"Somebody ought to teach those Russians a lesson," remarked Aggie, looking up from a sock which she had been knitting. Aggie, it might interest you to know, is the Lady Agatha Pilkington-Pugh and Vish's favorite lady-in-waiting. I am the Baroness Lehzen, usually called "Lizzie". The three of us are frequently a riot.

"At least the police should be notified," I said and started to ring for Brown.

"No," Vish declared emphatically. "It's a personal affair. I am Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and I shall attend to it myself. You, Lizzie—and you, Aggie, shall help me."

Aggie and I looked at each other and groaned. There are times when it is utterly impossible to persuade Vish that she is Victoria and not Boadicea. From the expression on her face, one of the times was at hand.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Come on," said Vish, her eyes gleaming with that purposeful expression we have learned to dread. "Get packed. We're off."

"Where to?" asked Aggie, feebly.

"To the Tower of London, of course." Vish thumped the table with a regal gesture. "We're going to catch those Russians red-handed."

Aggie wailed, and I hardly blamed her. Red-handed Russians had a horrible sound.

II

The Tower of London may be excellent for instructive and educational purposes, there may be amusing parts such as the collection of instruments of torture and the secret room in which the little princes were walled up alive, but as a place of residence it is not satisfactory. It is draughty and the plumbing is paleolithic. Aggie said it was not only draughty but dusty and absolutely no good for her hay fever. She promptly backed up her assertion by a violent fit of sneezing which finally was assuaged by a copious administration of blackberry cordial. Vish's reply to Aggie was that if the Tower had been good enough for so-and-so and so-and-so (a long list of notables who had found themselves at one time or another in this historic pile) it was good enough for her.

"At least," said Vish, "*your* head's not coming off."

"Dode be so sure," replied Aggie. "If I keeb od sdeezig . . ." Vish sniffed and opened another bottle of blackberry cordial.

Vish then informed us that we were to stay on guard in the jewel room and when the moment was at hand for the crime, the perpetrators could be easily overwhelmed with a selection of antique and historical weapons with which the Tower is, if my opinion has any value, over-supplied.

"The plan is beautifully direct and simple, Vish," I said, "but what's to prevent *us* from being overwhelmed ourselves? We don't know how many of those awful Russians—"

"Don't be a fool, Lizzie Lehzen," said Vish. "You know as well as I do that there is a strict rule that not more than two persons are allowed at one time in the jewel room."

"Well, then," I countered, "do you know when these awful Russians will make the attempt? I do think you ought to find out. We might be on guard for months."

"Mr. Disraeli said—" began Vish.

At that moment a heavy missile whizzed by our heads and buried itself in the wall. It was followed by another and a third carried away my second-best back switch. I dropped instantly to the floor, closed my eyes and waited for the end. Doubtless the Russians having noticed the paragraph in the papers themselves, had decided to lose no time.

"Agatha Pilkington-Pugh, you imbecile," said the tart voice of Vish, "put that down instantly." It seems that as her chief weapon of defence Aggie had picked out an old arbalest or cross-bow and had thought to improve the shining hour with a little target practice. Unfortunately, the cross-bow had a hair trigger and Aggie was still sporadically sneezing. The bolts had come unpleasantly near. Vish said that Aggie was showing the proper stuff and sent her around the corner where she could practise until she had got the hang of it. We had had our baptism of fire, Vish said, which ought to steady us considerably and strengthen our spirits.

That was Vish's way of looking at it, but the degree of enthusiasm with which I accepted it was distinctly my own. If Aggie wanted to play William Tell with me she might at least have waited until I could get an apple out of the tea-basket.

III

Mr. Disraeli arrived, Vish having sent for him, and she emerged elated from her conference with him.

"Mr. Disraeli says I have the sharpness of an eagle, the wisdom of a serpent, the boldness of a lion and ——"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"'Agatha Pilkington-Pugh, you ass! What are you doing in the Black Prince's armor?' Vish asked."

"The persistence of a cat in front of a fried-fish shop," concluded Aggie. "We all know Mr. Disraeli's line. What does he think of your plan?"

"He approves of it tremendously. He says our catching the Russians ourselves will put me in great favor in the eyes of the people. And it won't do you two any harm, either."

"Did you find out when all this is to happen?" I asked.

"Tonight. And I found out something else very interesting and of tremendous importance. The chief Russian agent is to be disguised as Mr. Gladstone.

"What?" said Aggie, incredulously. "Who told you that?"

"Mr. Disraeli. He had it himself from his secret agents. He says that the chief Russian conspirator, believing himself secure in his disguise, will make the attempt by himself while, or whilst, two of his fellow-conspirators wait for him downstairs at a side door. Mr. Disraeli suggests that we leave the side door open for the agent in order to facili-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tate his entrance and dull his perceptions with a false sense of security. When he arrives in the jewel room—whammo!" Vish concluded succinctly. It was scarcely a Victorian expression, but Vish was sincerely moved.

"Like a ton of bricks," said Aggie brandishing the arbalest.

"Three against one," I agreed; "child's play for a trio like us. It's hardly fair."

"Lizzie! Aggie!" said Vish. "This is for England!"

After Mr. Disraeli left, we had a light tea and settled down to our vigil. The last gray light slowly waned and we sat there in comparitive darkness. The gloom promptly brought Vish around to the subject of ghosts.

"I wouldn't be at all surprised if this place is haunted," she said. "And that reminds me—the side door hasn't been opened. Would you please run down and open it, Aggie?"

"M-me?" said Aggie. "In the p-pitch d-dark?"

"Certainly," said Vish. "Are you afraid? With a Pilkington-Pugh at Hastings and Flodden Field and Trafalgar and Quatre Bras?"

"And w-where are they now?" said Aggie. "W-westminster Abbey!" But she took a swallow of blackberry cordial and sallied forth.

Aggie had been gone half an hour and Vish was beginning to become irritated over her absence when we heard distant sounds which came slowly nearer in irregular bursts.

"The Russian!" hissed Vish, seizing my wrist painfully. "Get ready, Lizzie!"

"If it's the Russian," I said, "he's not disguised as Mr. Gladstone but as an ash can." For the sounds were distinctly of the heavy and clanking sort that one hears too frequently in the early morning as the garbage men go about their work.

"Then it's ghosts!" said Vish, not to be outdone. "Awkward, at a time like this, but interesting."

The clanking grew louder and louder and through the gloom emerged a figure in armor which stumbled its way as if it had been grievously wounded in some shadowy battle. It made directly for us.

"Halt!" said Vish, and I honestly believe her eyes flashed fire in the dark. "Ghost, you are in the presence of your Queen!"

Nothing from the ghost other than a slight giggle.

"Ghost!" thundered Vish, "did you hear what I said? I am your Queen! Kneel, miscreant!" Then she added to me in a loud whisper, "Probably an early Saxon. Its manners are distinctly lacking."

At that moment the ghost sneezed violently.

"Agatha Pilkington-Pugh, you ass! What are you doing in the Black Prince's armor?" Vish asked with annoyance and I daresay, disappointment.

"I was cold," said Aggie, "and this armor, if crowded, is warm. And it feels safe. I advise you both to try some yourselves."

Vish thought under the circumstances it might be a good idea. Theoretically opposed to violence, she now revised our plans to the extent of our all donning suits of armor. When the agent arrived we were to pretend that we were ghosts indignant at being disturbed in our last, long sleep. "Rather than belabor the poor man into insensibility," said Vish, "which plan, I confess, has not been of a pair with my conscience, in this way we shall probably frighten him out of his wits wthout injury, not only teaching him a lesson he richly deserves, but accomplishing our desired result. Lizzie—help me into that outfit of William Rufus."

As with everything else there is a certain knack to wearing armor. The unaccustomed weight, though evenly distributed, does not adapt itself readily to sudden movements from the center of gravity, but pulls a person completely off balance, in which event she is likely, as the children say, to faw down and go boom. We found this out almost immediately. After several false starts, Aggie, reaching over to pick up Vish's helmet where she

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Vish, Aggie and I lost our balance and came crashing down in a horrible clatter of metal on top of the poor burglar."

had laid it on the floor, pitched forward, fell flat on her face and stayed there.

"Aggie!" said Vish, "get up at once! This is no time for clowning. And in a woman of your age and social position . . . ! Get up instantly!"

"I can't," wailed Aggie. "I'm too heavy in all this junk. You'll have to help me up."

We tugged and tugged at Aggie, but for all our efforts she might have been a grand piano. But Vish is a woman of infinite resource. She went out in the hall and returned shortly with an armful of pikes, halberds, gisarmes and ceremonial partisans. Using these as crowbars, or peaveys, we started on our task of raising Aggie. First we rolled her over on her back. Then, by thrusting a poleaxe under her neck and using the shaft as a lever, we got her to a sitting position.

"This," said Vish, "is perfectly splendid. Hold still, Aggie. All we have to do now is raise you to your feet."

Aggie was able to move sufficiently to allow us to slide a quarterstaff under her. If

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she took one end of the staff, Vish said, and I took the other and we both heaved upwards we would raise Aggie without further trouble. Vish was quite right in effect, but just as we had Aggie a good twelve inches off the floor, the staff broke and Aggie sat down on the floor again, rather heavily.

In this manner we broke eight or ten valuable antique weapons of one sort or another before Vish thought of taking the rope that had hanged some noble whose name escapes me and throwing it over a projecting beam. By clinging to the rope and pulling, Aggie was finally able to get herself on her feet again. In fact, after Vish and I had encased ourselves in our armor, the rope proved invaluable, for we all of us fell down several times before we became accustomed to the weight of the metal.

Once we were a little more accustomed to the armor, Vish gave us our final instructions. When the Russian appeared, she said, we were to range ourselves side by side, raise ourselves on our tiptoes, raise our arms as high as possible over our heads with the hands bending sharply down in the manner of apparitions, and howl. After several rehearsals, Vish appeared satisfied and said we were really quite good, though she was somewhat worried that the scare might have a permanent effect upon the poor man. Then we steeled ourselves to wait by leaning against the wall, that, on the whole, being the one position on which we could safely count.

We did not have long to wait. After ten minutes or so, we heard the sound of footsteps approaching regularly and firmly. We settled our visors, ranged ourselves together and stood ready for the word "Britannia!" which Vish had arranged as the signal. The steps came nearer and nearer.

Preceded by a dim lantern, a figure walked into the jewel room and peered uncertainly about him.

"Now!" whispered Vish. "Britannia!"

We raised on tiptoe; we raised our arms and we howled. In our zeal for perfection, we must have bent slightly forward at the same time. For simultaneously, Vish, Aggie and I lost balance and came crashing down in a horrible clatter of metal on top of the poor burglar.

Beyond a startled gasp and an exclamation which I do not care to set down here, the burglar said nothing and made no move. Indeed, with Vish, Aggie and I and the armor on top of him, I don't see how he could have, had he wanted to.

It was Vish, as usual, who took the situation in hand. "This is most unexpected and undignified," she said. "We appear to have caught the wretch, but in so doing we have injured the poor fellow severely. Get up, Aggie and turn on the light."

"I can't," said Aggie, "as you may have noticed before. And Vish has got her foot stuck through my visor."

"I can't get up either," I volunteered. "I'm balanced across Aggie's—er—I'm balanced across Aggie and I can't move one way or the other."

"I'm underneath both of you," said Vish, "and this man is under me. The situation appears to be complicated."

"There is just one way to fix this, that I can see," I said angrily, "and that's with a wrecking crew and a tow-car. So you might as well send for them, Alexandrina Victoria Wettin."

"Don't be impatient, Lizzie," said Vish mildly. "Remember your blood pressure."

The Russian agent who had come for the crown jewels said nothing.

After we had lain for some time in what appeared to be an inextricable mass of scrap iron, I discovered that the fall had knocked out most of the pins that secured my armor, our inexperience having caused their not being fixed any too firmly. By wriggling and twisting in a manner of which Mr. Houdini might have thought well, I managed to divest myself of my suit of mail and get on my feet, after which it was comparatively simple to light the lights and help Vish and Aggie.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Our first concern was for the agent who, though without serious contusions or lacerations, was still unconscious.

"This is our man, all right," said Vish, "disguised, as Mr. Disraeli said, as Mr. Gladstone. And a remarkably good disguise, I must say. The whiskers actually look real." She gave them a tug.

"Upon my word," said Vish, "I believe they *are* real!" With that the man opened his eyes, looked about him and remarked:

"Your Majesty's most humble servant, and would Your Majesty kindly inform me what, for——sake is the idea of all this?"

The voice had a familiar and unmistakable ring. Vish looked at me, I looked at Aggie and Aggie, after sneezing three or four times, looked at Vish.

The man was not a Russian agent disguised as Mr. Gladstone. He *was* Mr. Gladstone!

Vish gave Mr. Gladstone what was left of the blackberry cordial and explained the circumstances to him, hoping that he would take them as a true statesman and a sportsman. I regret to say he was inclined to take them as neither.

"Preposterous!" stormed Mr. Gladstone. "Crown jewels indeed! Whoever heard of such a ridiculous plot!"

"It was in the paper," said Vish.

"In *The Times*?" asked Mr. Gladstone.

"I did not see it in *The Times*," evaded our dear Vish, who did not care to be drawn into an admission that she had any knowledge of the *Pink 'Un*.

"If it was not in *The Times*," said Mr. Gladstone, "and it was not, such a ridiculous plot never existed other than as a figment of someone's malicious imagination." He refused to be drawn from his position and in the end, Vish, to whom the sturdy traditions of the British people are sacred and in whom, indeed, most of the traditions find their being, was inclined to agree with him. Accordingly, supporting Mr. Gladstone among us, we slowly made our way home.

IV

On our return to Buckingham Palace, Vish asked Mr. Gladstone what he had been doing in the Tower of London at that time of night, anyhow.

"Your Majesty's most humble servant," replied Mr. Gladstone. "I had called earlier at the palace to present the latest aspects of the Irish question to Your Majesty and was informed that Your Majesty had been pleased to take herself to the Tower of London. I repaired to the Tower forthwith, only to find my enterprise rewarded by the — —— reception ever accorded to a misguided man conscientiously active in the service of his — —— country!" I am sorry to have to record it, but I have been a veracious woman all my life, not at all given to exaggeration, and that is exactly how Mr. Gladstone expressed himself.

Vish must have felt that Mr. Gladstone had some provocation for his unseemly remarks for she said nothing other than "Well, then, Mr. Gladstone, what about the Irish question?"

"With Your Majesty's consent," replied Mr. Gladstone sourly, taking his leave, "we will table the Irish question for the moment in favor of a serious discussion of the Tacna-Arnica situation."

Mr. Disraeli was a lot more cheerful about the matter, though Vish was inclined to take him to task for his gross misinformation about the alleged plot.

"Ma'am," said Mr. Disraeli, "if my secret agents were grievously in error, I shall see to it personally that I secure smoother and better secret agents. Though I cannot agree that lack of notice of a plot in *The Times* is proof conclusive that there is no plot. Consider Mr. Gladstone's influence with *The Times*."

"Mr. Disraeli," said Vish, "explain yourself. Why should Mr. Gladstone not want a notice of the plot to appear in *The Times*? And now I think of it, why did you tell us

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the Russian agent would appear in the disguise of Mr. Gladstone?"

"I wouldn't like to say, Ma'am," said Mr. Disraeli, laying a finger alongside of his peculiar nose.

Vish is an intelligent woman. It was a delicate moment. She did not see fit to press Mr. Disraeli further.

"At any rate," said Vish, drawing herself up with her most imperial mien, "we have saved the crown jewels for England!"

"Ma'am," replied Disraeli, "the crown jewels are over at Sir John Benn's where they have been this past fortnight, being polished. All in all, I am inclined to agree with Mr. Gladstone. If you will indulge me, Ma'am, the entire affair seems to have been decidedly *Vishy*." He laughed heartily.

"We are *not* amused!" said Vish, giving Mr. Disraeli an awful look. Dear Wellington, Vish's pet pug dog jumped off her lap and went over and presented Mr. Disraeli with his hat, stick and gloves.

Wellington never did like Mr. Disraeli.

"On our return to Buckingham Palace—".

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE HISTORY OF THEIR BOOKS

XII. JOHN ERSKINE

by Arthur Bartlett Maurice

Among our contemporary representative American story-tellers John Erskine is the conspicuous example of one who figuratively won to full success over night. In the evening he was merely a brilliant young professor at a great university, highly esteemed in a limited circle. In the morning, as the author of *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*, he was one of the country's most widely read and most widely discussed novelists. Fitting in with the from-dusk-to-dawn aspect of the book is the story of its writing. *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* was begun in January, 1925, and finished in the following July. In the rush of university work John Erskine could give only two hours out of twenty-four to the story. Every line of it was written between eleven at night and one in the morning.

Whence came the idea of the witty and ironic narrative? Perhaps there was the suggestion of the method of treatment in Jules Lemaître's *Marginalia*. But the mystery of the famous heroine had always appealed to Mr. Erskine. The world in general knows Helen of Troy only from Homer's *Iliad*, which tells nothing of the last five years of her life. The story of those years is related in the *Ethopiad*, the little-known sequel to the *Iliad*. It runs through the poems of the Trojan Cycle of which the poems have been lost but the plots remain. But the richest mine of lore about the woman whose face "launched a thousand ships" Mr. Erskine found in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* of the French savant—Pierre Bayle. In that book are gathered all the legends about Helen.

What explanation did Helen give to her husband when she returned to him after the tempestuous years of her absence from his fireside? It was to answer that question to his own satisfaction that Mr. Erskine began his story. Carrying out that idea the original title was "The Argument of Helen". In the Faculty Club of Columbia his colleagues asked him what he was writing. He told them "The Argument of Helen". "What is that?" they asked. He was obliged to explain that it was a novel about the private life of Helen of Troy. This explanation "registered" so well that it became the eventual title.

The story of the writing of *Galahad* is a tale of many cities. It was begun in the late summer of 1925. Through the following autumn the author toiled at the story during stays in Paris, Florence, Rome, and Venice. Perhaps the bitter cold that he found in Venice contributed to lead to the *impasse* which for a time threatened the book. In the original version Galahad was killed at the end of Part IV. The last words written in Venice were "Galahad's death took the heart out of Launcelot". It also took the heart out of John Erskine. The story was laid aside and not resumed until his return to America. It was finished in August, 1926.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The chief sources for *Galahad* were Malory, and the Frenchman, Gaston Paris, for the entire Arthurian Legend belongs almost equally to France and England. Tennyson, in his *Idylls of the King*, departed radically from the earlier versions. He took out one of the two Elaines. Galahad was originally a battle hero, and in that rôle was made the illegitimate son of King Arthur. When Arthur became a Christian, Galahad's reputed paternity was transferred to Launcelot. According to Tennyson he was nobody's son. The John Erskine story in the first draft made Galahad's mother the dominating character.

His next book, *Adam and Eve*, was begun at Wilton, Connecticut, in the summer of 1926, and mostly written in the winter of 1926-27. The Lilith who plays so prominent a part in the story is not mentioned in the Bible, with the exception of a later reference to her as the "screech owl", but she is to be found in the Talmud. Mr. Erskine first met her in a poem by Rossetti. The painters of the Middle Ages certainly knew her, for on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel Michaelangelo depicted her with a serpent's head on the body of a woman.

The basic idea of *Sincerity* was of a female Enoch Arden. The story grew first out of a strange tale of real life told to Mr. Erskine. The triangle in question involved two women and a man. A wife left her husband, went to South America—which was changed to Europe in *Sincerity*—and there remained for ten years. Soon after the beginning of that period the husband and the second woman settled down in a small city with the appearance of the utmost respectability and conventionality. Persons of cultivation and charm, they were at once accepted and became pillars in the church and outstanding figures in the city's social life. One night at the end of the ten years a strange woman arrived. The next morning the supposed wife departed, and the real wife remained.

But that was only part of *Sincerity*. Something more was needed before the plot took definite form. A woman friend of Mr. Erskine, a writer, supplied the rest. To a newspaper she contributed an article on some such subject as "Now That I'm Thirty" or "Now That I'm Forty". The article was published anonymously. It brought to her a number of letters. In one of them a man poured out the tragic story of his life. The writer signed his name. He was one of her most intimate friends. She had never had an inkling of his tragedy, and he believed that in writing he was baring his heart to an entire stranger. Out of the two stories *Sincerity* was born.

Mr. Erskine's new novel, *Uncle Sam*—originally written with the title "In the Eyes of His Family", now used as the subtitle—is an attempt to dramatize opinions, to mold into narrative form the clash and conflict now going on in the Republic. It is a book likely to swell the author's letter box to astonishing proportions. That letter box is already a heavy one with the communications provoked by the books of the past. Many of these letters are hot with the wrath of outraged womanhood wincing at his irony. Some of them are strange. One woman sought to employ him as a matrimonial agency. She saw in the living original from whom she was sure that he had drawn Sir Galahad her ideal mate. She sent to Mr. Erskine a proposal of marriage with the request that he forward it without delay to that original.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE HOLIDAY

by Norah James

THE breeze was very slight. Even the street-car tickets in the gutter withstood it. Little bits of white and green and buff oblongs, they lay there just where the descending passengers had dropped them. And all the time the sun blazed down till its rays seemed to leap back into the air from the hard road. There was a metallic glare everywhere; the sidewalk glittered, the street-car lines glittered, the store windows glittered, the face of the ice-cream vendor glittered. It was hot. A group of children stood around the ice-cream barrow. The shiny-faced Italian kept dipping his wooden spoon into the bright metal can around which was packed the freezing mixture. With a flourish he picked up a cone, heaped it with vanilla ice from the spoon and handed it to the nearest child who held out a coin. An undefinable smell hung in the air—of sun, stale air and unwashed little bodies. The ice-cream barrow was standing outside a house where the door stood wide open and the window had no curtains. You could see into the room from outside. A double bed was visible. It was made of black iron and there was still one brass knob left on the corner nearest the window. On the steps leading from the front door three children sat. They were all sucking ice-cream cones. They licked round the edges very slowly, making the pleasure last as long as possible. By and by a woman came along the side-walk. She had a heavily laden oil-cloth shopping bag in one hand. It dragged her over sideways a little. Her lips were thin and a pale pink. She did not wear a hat and, as her hair was mouse color without any signs of gray, she was probably still under forty years of age. When she reached the house where the children were sitting they all jumped up.

"Hullo, Mum."

"While you was gone, Mum, the lady from the hospital came."

"Oh, drat it, now I've missed her," Mrs. Ridley exclaimed.

"She said she'd be along again this afternoon, Mum," the eldest boy explained. Up to then the little girl who had been standing near the woman had said nothing. Mrs. Ridley looked at her anxiously.

"How are you feeling, Lil?"

"All right, Mum, 'cept it's awful hot," the child said listlessly.

"Yes, that it is. Now I must get along and cook a bit of something for lunch."

She picked up the shopping bag which she had put down on the step while she talked.

"Let me come with you and help, Mum," the eldest boy said.

"No, you stay here until I calls you. You'll be more in the way than not." She brushed past him and went inside the front door. When she was in the living room she put the bag down on the table with a grunt. Then she took off the long fawn coat she was wearing and put on an apron. She was a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thin woman with a high stomach. She set about preparing the mid-day meal. As she peeled potatoes she thought, "Now what does the lady from the hospital want? More expense I suppose. I'll give Mr. Mimms a piece of my mind when I see him next, selling me spuds that are all eyes, like these here".

She dug viciously at one of the black specks as she thought this and the knife went through suddenly and nearly cut her hand. When she had peeled enough, she put them in a pot of water and set it over the gas on top of the oven. Then she unwrapped some tough rather purple looking bits of meat and held them under the tap over the sink, in the corner of the room. She put the meat in the pot with the potatoes and cut up an onion to add to the stew. She tried to turn the gas under the iron saucepan higher, but the flame remained low. Her face wrinkled up in a frown as she thought, "There, now I'll have to put another penny in the meter. That stove seems to eat the gas, it really do".

She went over to the shopping basket and searched for her purse. On looking she found she had not got a penny in it, so she went to the door and shouted, "Tommy, come 'ere".

The eldest child ran into the room and she gave him sixpence. "Run across to Potter's and ask them if they'll oblige me with six coppers. The gas is giving out. And look sharp or there'll be no dinner for any of you." The child took the coin and ran off. When Tommy returned with the change his mother put a coin in the meter which was on a bracket on the wall to the right of the cooking stove. When she turned the handle by the meter the flame under the pot shot up with a little plop.

By and by the stew was ready and the table roughly laid.

Mrs. Ridley called shrilly, "Now then hurry up all of you, before it gets cold".

The three children came at once and sat down around the table. They did not speak till the last sign of gravy had been wiped clean around their plates with the bits of bread. The exception was the little girl, who made patterns in the mound of food on her plate with her knife and fork.

"Now then, Lil, stop messing about with your food and eat it up like a good child," Mrs. Ridley said.

"I ain't hungry, Mum."

"Too many of them nasty ice-creams, that's what's the matter with you."

"Didn't make no difference to me, Mum." Tommy said. He eyed his sister's plate furtively.

"Nor me," his brother said.

"Well, Lil, if you ain't going to eat it you'd best divide it between the boys."

After the meal was finished the children went back to the step. It was hotter than ever. Mrs. Ridley kept passing her hand over her face to wipe away the sweat as she washed up. Outside the shouts of children playing in the street came to her ears. She wondered when the health visitor would call again, and whether she would have time to get a wash as well as tidy up the room first.

At last she was through with the immediate toil and had just done her hair and sat down in the chair by the window for a moment's rest, when Tommy dashed in.

"Mum, the lady what came this morning's just coming up the street."

"All right! I'm ready for her when she comes."

The caller was a small plump woman. Mrs. Ridley liked her at once because she didn't look all round the room and stare, but simply said, "I'm sorry to bother you, Mrs. Ridley, but the doctor asked me to call and see you about Lily". Mrs. Ridley made her sit down in a chair and then the two talked for some time about the heat wave and the lack of any place near where the children could play, and how good it would be when the schools opened again, and how bad unemployment was, and what high rents you had to pay for even one room in the Holborn district, and what the doctor said about Lily, and how she must get away to the sea for a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

change after the operation she'd had for mastoid, and what had better be done. In the end Mrs. Ridley said she would speak to Mr. Ridley and see what they could think of. Mr. Ridley had a sort of second cousin who lived at Townsea and maybe she would take Lil for a week or so. Then the health visitor said good afternoon and left.

At five o'clock Mr. Ridley slouched home. He had been in the Indian Army till he had taken his discharge. Soon afterwards he had drifted into marriage with his wife. Somehow after he had left the army he had degenerated. Perhaps his initiative had been sapped by those years of discipline during which he had been told exactly what to do, and in which meals and clothes appeared automatically. He was a builder's laborer now and not a success. Babies came too often and unemployment even more frequently. He had no vices and never lost his temper. His children were fond of him and so was his wife, though the ease with which he bore misfortune occasionally irritated her.

When he heard about Lil during the meal he agreed readily to write that very night to his relation at Townsea and ask if she could be taken there.

"That will be all right, Ma, don't you worry. Rose has a lot of kids herself and I don't s'pose one more will make any difference."

Apparently it didn't, for in a few days' time a smudgy note came back from Rose Taggerty, saying that Lil would be welcome, and asking when would she be coming so that someone could meet her at the station.

The following week Lily went off to Townsea. The fare had been collected somehow, and her wardrobe enlarged by borrowing clothes from generous neighbors. When the time came to go the little girl had cried and so had Mrs. Ridley. The child cheered up almost at once, however, for it was the first time she had been on a train journey except by the Underground. Also the guard, in whose charge she had been placed, gave her a bar of chocolate; and, above all, she was going to the seaside. She had a spade and pail with her. They were in the rack above, opposite, and when she wasn't looking out of the window she was looking up at them. It was very hot in the carriage and she wished that she could take off her woolen cap. However, there was a stiff looking lady sitting next her and she wore her hat, so Lily didn't like to take her own off. The train rushed past street after street of drab houses; they all had little grimy plots of garden to them and the child thought they looked lovely. When the train really did get to the wide peace of the fields and woods, her head was jolting up and down in sleep. So she missed seeing clouds racing across the sky and the rich shadows that lurked beneath the trees. The stiff woman sitting next her moved nearer gently, till the child's head rested against her arm.

When they arrived at Townsea Lily woke up. Several passengers helped to collect her things. The stiff lady said, "Well, little girl, and is any one going to meet you here?"

"Mrs. Taggerty said as 'ow she or one of the girls would be 'ere," Lil said.

At that moment the guard came to the door. He took her to the ticket collector and explained to him about Lily. While they were talking a good-looking girl of about sixteen, standing just outside the ticket barrier, who had been listening to the conversation, came up.

"You Lily Ridley?" she asked.

"Yes, I'm her," Lily answered.

"Well, you come along with me. Ma sent me to meet you."

"That's all right then," the guard said, and smiled at Lily. "So long little 'un. Hopes you have a good time."

The girl, who was Phyllis Taggerty, picked up the straw hold-all and Lily moved off beside her, carrying the spade and pail. When they got outside the station they walked along until they came to a post with a sign on it, which said "All cars stop here".

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It saves a penny going from 'ere instead of from the station," Phyllis explained.

Lily sniffed the air. The street seemed as hot as her own street in London, but there was a breeze blowing. It carried with it a smell of stale fish. Lily thought it was the smell of the sea.

When the car came they struggled to get on top of it. There were too many people before them, but they managed to get inside.

"Now, then," the conductor shouted, "this ain't a moving van."

Phyllis said, "I should say not. They gives you more room in a moving van".

The conductor rang the bell twice sharply and shouted, "Well, put your bundle down by the entrance, if you must come".

After this they found a seat near the door. At first Lily kept twisting her head round so that she could look out of the window, because she half expected to see the sea at any moment. The street-car ran on up a steep hill. The street was quite a wide one. The shops on either side of it soon gave place to tall gray houses.

After about five minutes Phyllis said, "How this tram do crawl. I've got a date with a boy in half an hour and he won't half be wild if I'm late".

She didn't expect an answer and Lily didn't give her one. She wasn't twisting her head around any more and she felt very tired. She gripped her spade and pail hard. Somehow they comforted her. They meant that she was at the seaside. By and by Phyllis got up and pulled the bell. When the street-car stopped they climbed down. Phyllis Taggerty walked so fast that the little girl had to run once or twice to keep up with her. At last they reached a very narrow street. Without knowing why Lily felt comforted. It seemed like home. Really it was rather a forlorn-looking street, for everywhere the paint was peeling and there were no gardens. When they came to number twenty-six Phyllis said, "Well, here we are", and dumped the hold-all down inside the gate. She shouted: "Mum, here's Lil Ridley", then she turned away and ran down the street. Lily was left standing just inside the pathway which led to the door. On each side of the tiles were pebbles. While she still stood there not knowing what to do the front door opened, and seven yelling children rushed upon her. Behind them waddled a vast woman. Tired out, Lily began to cry. For a moment the children stood around her. Then they all ran off out of the gate. Mrs. Taggerty, the big woman, loomed towards her.

"Well now, dearie, why ever are you alone?" she asked. "Didn't Phyllis meet you?"

Lily gulped.

"She did, but she had a date."

"Oh, her and her dates," Mrs. Taggerty grunted. She picked up the hold-all and put a heavy arm round the child's shoulder.

"Now you come along and have a nice cup of tea and maybe you'd fancy a bit of kipper if you're hungry. Yer like yer dad, in a way, and yet not, in a manner of speaking."

When they got inside the house, which had a curiously musty smell, Mrs. Taggerty took Lily into the kitchen. There was a brown varnished paper on the wall. From the gas-bracket, in the center of the ceiling, there hung a fly-paper thickly coated with the victims for which the manufacturers designed it. Lily hated fly-papers; they always made her feel sick.

"Now sit you down. The kettle's just on the boil and a cup of tea will put you right," Mrs. Taggerty said. So Lily sat down on the chair by the table. She did not speak a word. A large black cat uncurled itself from the corner of the table where it was lying and came over to her. She tickled it behind its ears and in return the cat purred and rubbed itself against her legs. This was comforting and so was the bread and dripping and the kipper and the tea that Mrs. Taggerty got for her.

"You'll be tired," she said. "You'd best see where you'll be sleeping. The closet's outside

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the yard and we wash under the scullery tap. Now come along."

Lily followed her. They went through one fairly large room, which seemed to the child's tired mind to be full of beds.

"You'll sleep in the other room," Mrs. Taggerty said, and opened a communicating door. Here was another smaller room. There were two double beds in it and a single one and a small chair-bedstead which was set across at right angles at the foot of one of the double beds. Mrs. Taggerty put Lily's hold-all on this and said: "This bed's real comfortable. You'll sleep all right here. We're quite a big family just now as we've got a neighbor's daughter lodging 'ere while she's in 'ospital. There are four of you girls in here and the twins. They're only little 'uns. Freddy and Jack, not eight till December. I thought you'd rather be in here than in my room. Dad and Dick and me and poor Maudy, wot's blind, and Baby sleep there".

Lily thought it all sounded rather confusing and crowded, but she liked Mrs. Taggerty. Mrs. Taggerty went on: "Now probably you'd be best in bed. If you've been as ill as your dad says the journey must 'ave tired you. You can meet all the others tomorrow. What do you think?"

Lily didn't know what to think so she just said, "Yes, thank you".

Mrs. Taggerty kissed her and said, "Well, I must be getting along I s'pose. You be all right do you think?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Well, then, good-night and happy dreams." Then she went out of the room and left Lily to undress and get into bed.

When she woke up the next morning her head ached. She felt heavy and queer and it was rather difficult to breathe. The one window in the room was tightly shut and the sun streamed through. Lily watched the lines the beams made amongst the glittering particles of dust. Then, when she was really awake, she looked round the room stealthily. In the double bed nearest her the twins were already awake. They were scuffling under the bedclothes. In the other bed the two big girls slept heavily. Lily wished she could get up. She felt so hot. Presently through the shut door between the two rooms there came the shrill yells of a baby.

A man's voice shouted: "'Ere, you, stop that row or I'll knock your blasted 'ead off".

Lily shrank under the bedclothes. Then there was the sound of a boot falling and a bed creaked and someone walked heavily across the room. This seemed to be a signal, for the twins at once threw off the bedclothes and clad in their shirts leaped out on the floor. One of them seized a pillow and threw it at the bed where Phyllis slept. The pillow hit her and she gave a grunt and woke up. Then the door between the two rooms opened and a burly red-haired man came in fastening his braces. Somehow they all tumbled into their clothes and presently were sitting round the table in the kitchen. They gulped down strong tea and ate thick slices of bread and margarine.

After breakfast Mrs. Taggerty sent all the younger children out of the house. Lily went with them. They were quite friendly, but somehow she wanted to be alone. She wandered off by herself down the street until she came to a narrow lane. She thought that perhaps it led to the sea and she went along hopefully. By and by she came to a stone bridge, where the road crossed a stream—at least probably it was a stream in the winter and spring. Even now there was a tiny trickle of water running through the mud on either side. Lily thought, "This must lead to the sea anyway. I wonder if it tastes salt".

There was a gap in the dusty hedge just by the bridge. The child crawled through carefully and went down the bank to the mud. When she got there the water looked so dirty that she thought that she wouldn't taste it after all.

"I'll bring my spade here this afternoon and dig," she thought. "Teacher said if you dug near the sea the hole always fills up with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

water." She was quite happy. The sun poured down and the sky was very blue.

"It was a pity," she thought, "that the water should be so smelly." She sat down where there was a patch of grass and rested for a time. By and by she took off her shoes and stockings and walked down again to the water. The mud felt squelchy and cool under her bare toes. When she reached the stream she walked along the bed. The stream trickled sluggishly by. Now and again she stopped and looked down at her feet. It was fun to see how distorted her toes looked through the ripples. Each time she stayed where she was till her weight made her toes sink in the mud. When she couldn't see them any more she moved on again. The sun was so hot that it made her feel rather sick, and by and by she turned round and came back to the patch of grass. She dried her feet on her handkerchief and put on her shoes and stockings. Then she went back to the bridge.

The stream remained for her the best part of the holiday. Not that she didn't have a good time in other ways too. The Taggertys were very kind to her, and one night Mr. Taggerty took them to the cinema. And they had a lovely meal of shrimps at the stall by the pub on their way back. She had rather bad dreams the same night, but that couldn't be helped. Another day four of them, with the blind girl Maudy between them, started off to visit the harbor. Half way there it began to rain, so in the end they went into a shop and had tea, instead. They had some lovely cakes that were very yellow and had bright pink icing on top. Lily almost forgot by this time that she was at the seaside. Townsea was such a big place and there was so much to do and see round where the Taggertys lived. Yet it was like being in the country, living so near the low-lying bit of land through which ran the stream. She had told no one that once a tiny fish actually wriggled under her toes as she walked in the water. It was too exciting to tell.

At last the day came for Lily to go back home. She was not so pale as when she arrived. When she left Mrs. Taggerty was really sorry to lose her. She made up a parcel of sandwiches for her and Phyllis got her a stick of Townsea rock, a long pink stick that said in red letters in the white sugar inside "Townsea Rock". Lily gave it a lick to see what it was like and it was peppermint. There was a lot of kissing to be got through and Lily hugged the baby so hard that he cried, so she let him take a lick at her Townsea rock. The twins went with Phyllis to see her off at the station. This time they rode on the outside of the street-car. When they reached the station and Lily got up to come down the steps she saw a distinct blue line across the sky. She wondered what it was. She didn't have time to ask Phyllis because of the difficulty of getting the twins off the tram safely. If she had asked, Phyllis could have told her at once that the line was the sea on the horizon.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STUART SHERMAN AND THE WAR AGE

by G. R. Elliott

That hour in the end of August, 1926, when the news of Sherman's death reached me is marked in my memory with a kind of black silence. It recalls the strange quiet that fell upon the American scene a few years earlier when the robust voice of Roosevelt ended. But Sherman was in mid-career; he had not reached his forty-fifth birthday. Ahead of him, one hoped, were the years in which so versatile an essayist might win a fuller maturity. In the previous year I had taken part in extending to him the invitation of Bowdoin College to be one of the speakers in her institute of contemporary American literature. The occasion was in tune with his latest affiliations and he expressed a keen interest in it. But finally he declined the invitation on the ground that he was overwhelmed, yet happily overwhelmed, he intimated, with his new duties as editor of *Books*. And now it is clear from his *Life* that he was joyously and unwittingly working himself to death. During his summer vacation in 1925 he was restless for New York: "I shall be very happy to return and have a regular job on my hands all the time, with no margin for meditation between". And later: "Since I have left the sure academic treadmill which keeps one in motion with no commotion, I find an increasing craving for stimulus". Such was his mood in his last year. Never till this year, so he remarked with democratic jocularity, had he had "a really heart-filling sense of life as one damned thing after another". Heart-filling but also heart-breaking. Four months after this remark, without any warning that Sherman would heed, his overstrained heart suddenly gave way.

Yet the mood of his last months is quite characteristic of his life as a whole. The consistency of his *temperament* appears from first to last in the *Life*. This fascinating though in some important respects too uncritical book, by two devoted and competent friends of Sherman, seems to me of equal value with his essays. For he was more distinguished as a person than as a critic. Though I had read his critical works with pleasure, I was never tempted to re-read them with care, until this biography sent me eagerly back to them. They lack that originative depth of meditation which in the most compelling books of criticism, like the continual voice of an underground stream, lures the reader to retrace his steps thoughtfully, again and again. But now I find in them one voice of a many-toned personality that needed to express itself in many ways: in multitudinous daily labors, in snatches of sport and pastime and travel, in keen words and baffling silences among his friends, in hasty notebook jottings and, best of all, in a voluminous and vivid correspondence with an extraordinary variety of acquaintances.

If his *Life* be read along with his works the whole forms a singular picture of the literary and educational life of America dur-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing the quarter-century centering in the World War. No other writer so fully embodied the strange antitheses of that period. An American wit has remarked that Sherman "tried to combine in himself the two Babbitts"—Professor Irving Babbitt and the George F. Babbitt of Sinclair Lewis.

His unsteadiness in the war period was due to the paradoxicalness of the age, added to his own. The *Life* says he was "vivid, austere, playful, serious, tempery, suave, humorous, sardonic, gentle, severe, passionate, stoical, egotistic, generous, poetic, rational". This engaging list rightly omits the word "grave". Sherman was deficient in a certain kind of gravity, hard to define, which is central in the critical nature. The authors of the *Life* are also right in asserting that "the fundamental trait of Sherman's criticism, underlying all his attitudes and principles, is a splendid gusto, a huge enjoyment of many kinds of literary excellence". But they are wrong in their feeling, expressed at the close, "that he was destined to attain to a profounder synthesis of the critical spirit than anyone had yet reached in America". For they have demonstrated to the reader in eight hundred pages that Sherman lacked the necessary gravity for such a profound synthesis, and that he lacked the necessary condition for such a gravity. The necessary condition is not a splendid gusto underlying all the critic's principles. It is a firm set of principles underlying all his splendid gusto.

Sherman's insecurity and inconsequence in respect to critical principles were partly the cause and partly the result of his extraordinary impressibility. This feature of his temperament was concealed by his attitude of complete independence—a sincere attitude which, like Roosevelt's, was derived from democratic modernity and buttressed by a sturdy moral character. Near the end of the *Life* it is hinted that Sherman was not apt at making a "serious apology" for a past deed or utterance. But also he was very inapt at confessing and scrutinizing the influences exerted upon him by other persons. An intensely social being, he was keenly though hiddenly susceptible to personal pressures. Time and again one finds him imperturbably waiving the advice of others, only to discover, later on, that it has had a decided effect upon him. His impressibility is the main key, I think, to the paradox of his career: his early adoption and later abandonment of the aims of high criticism.

It was the personality rather than the ideas of Professor Babbitt that captured Sherman as a graduate student in Harvard University. His predisposition was for poetic gusto, not for consistent thought. Son of a wandering Yankee, he had had an irregular, impecunious and quite adventurous boyhood in the middle and far West. As a youth of thirteen, roughcut and prematurely responsible, he came to his ancestral Vermont with a feeling of awkward disdain for the East and with no ambition to attend college, much less to become what he later delighted to call a "damned professor"; although deeper still in his nature was a love of sound conventions. In Williams College he displayed the ineptitude of the average undergratuate in regard to ideas. But he continued and developed the poetic zest for reading and for writing that had been awakened in him by a teacher in his last year in high school, when he had galloped through Jowett's *Plato,* Spenser, and the Romantic poets "in search of the gusto I heard in that teacher's voice, in search of the glow I had seen in that teacher's eyes". His experience with Professor Babbitt was similar.

Certain others of Babbitt's pupils, put on their guard by the ruthlessness of his pursuit of great ethical ideas, have managed to hold his thought at arm's length and to attain in middle age a somewhat critical view of it suited to their own capacities. Sherman's procedure was just the other way around. He embraced Babbitt's philosophy immediately, externally and statically. He was captivated by Babbitt's work not primarily as an avenue to truth but as the literary expression of a vig-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

orous and distinguished personality. He imitated the ways of Babbitt and More in his yearning for literary self-expression. He could imitate them with remarkable success just because of his acute impressibility, and because in combination with native literary genius he had a certain intellectual simplicity. The ideas of his two masters did not penetrate him deeply but sprang up quickly like the seed that fell on stony ground.

The resulting book, *On Contemporary Literature,* 1917, has in it a note of quick and hard brilliance. Yet it is not only a rare production for a critic in his early thirties, it is one of the really distinguished works of criticism in our language. In the opening chapter, how warmly the democracy of Mark Twain is felt and how simply its limitation is seen: "Twain does not give us much help toward realizing our best selves; but he is a rock of refuge when the ordinary self, the 'divine average', is in danger". The ensuing chapters on leading current novelists show that "ordinary self" endangered by abnormal selves masquerading as supernormal selves, in the cloak of esthetic naturalism. With the suavest yet exactest irony the masks are twitched off; especially in the most finished and satisfying essay of all, the one on George Moore. No wonder this gentleman found the book the "ugliest" he had ever read. It is the effectual opponent of enamelled nastiness: it is wholesome, militant, bright-smiling good sense. Heaven knows, what George Moore was too knowing to know, how much the time needed it and how much the times will continue to need it.

Sherman's enemies were mistaken, and his friends fatefully mistaken, in depreciating his first book as derivative and in regarding his second book, *Americans,* 1922, as more fruitfully critical. The *Life* says: "In *Americans* there is a greater body of writing that should endure than in any other single book of Sherman's. Only the first two topics owe their being to a controversial impulse, while one or two others are of doubtful vitality. But the essays on Franklin, Emerson, Hawthorne, Whitman, Roosevelt, the Adamses, and Mr. Paul Elmer More are as solidly based as they are brilliantly written". And elsewhere: "Perhaps it is the most substantial of all his books. The studies are done with rare penetration and balance. . . . There are few books better fitted to give to Americans an understanding of the values of the national inheritance. To open and close this volume there are essays on Mr. Mencken and Mr. More which serve to define Sherman's position. He is perhaps not equally far from the Nietzschean individualism of Mencken and the reactionary humanism of More, but he is now remote from both; and his position, as compared with either extreme, is central".

This is a good example of bad American criticism. It is warm and amiable half-truth. It is fundamentally confused. It is typical of that American academic outlook with which Sherman's friends wrongly identified the thought of More and Babbitt, and from which they wrongly fancied that Sherman was now freeing himself. It is the sort of criticism that Sherman himself was being influenced to write and to be satisfied with.

Many of the world's best critical writings, perhaps most of them, have "owed their being to a controversial impulse". Controversy is the natural pabulum of good criticism, and the critic should offer up thanks for it as for his daily bread. Why, then, is *Americans* praised for being almost devoid of it? Because the academic mind dislikes "controversial impulse" and looks askance upon the battle of radically opposed principles; and because in America this aversion has been abnormally heightened by the genial influence of Emerson and Whitman which, stiffly resisted at first, has gradually succeeded in seeping throughout our academe. By the second decade of the twentieth century American literary academics had become shyly but surely in love with the romantic, soaring, tolerant, vague and uncritical idealism of the previous century. Therefore it was discon-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certing to be abruptly summoned by More and Babbitt, presently assisted by the World War, to an austere overhauling of that very idealism. We academics (I am speaking confessionally) felt like a middle-aged bachelor who, having long resisted the blandishments of a local beauty, leads her at last toward the altar, only to have his ears assailed by two stern voices announcing just cause and impediment. We had always known that Romantic idealism was far from perfect, but we could not see how prostitute it had now become. The situation was most disconcerting; indeed it was hateful. As for the War, our hatred of that "controversial impulse" was restrained by our necessary public spirit and patriotism. All the better could we hate the war of ideas begun by those two violent radicals, Babbitt and More.

The common supposition that the radical humanism of these two critics had for its chief opponent the naturistic radicalism of the journalists, and that the latter was mainly responsible for converting or perverting Sherman, is not tenable. Loud, to be sure, was the outcry of current writers against Babbitt and More. But, after all, the current writers were children howling in the night and with no language but a howl. On the other hand the opposition of the academics was not loud but deep. It was a fixed, blind, shrugging aversion; and it was effectual. It postponed for a generation or more any general understanding of the central truth of modern radical humanism. Only the academics had the requisite learning to understand that truth—and to misunderstand it. Their fault was not that they "criticized", but that they failed to *criticize*, Babbitt and More. These two writers, not fairly encountered on their own ground, remained unfought, unvalued. They are more faulty, and far more significant, than the American academic mind has so far succeeded in perceiving. This imperception was Sherman's also.

Like President Wilson, whom he revered, Sherman was an animated academic conservative molded by nineteenth-century idealism. Like Roosevelt, to be sure, he had a fighting style and he complained that "professors won't fight". But like his brother professors he became averse from the combat of essential principles. Immensely shocked by the World War, he felt intensely and mistakenly that democracy is an essential principle. Therefore unlike his two masters he missed the root meaning of the World War and helped his countrymen to miss it. He did not face the root evils of modern civilization. He was not a radical thinker any more than he was ever a radical emotionalist. In an age of intense inner conflicts he had none. The mental and moral *Sturm und Drang* of the era never went beneath his surface even in the unsettled days of his youth. He accepted with healthy simplicity the *mores* he inherited from New England. He accepted them as the natural and necessary bases of his own personality. So far from rebelling against them, as others were doing, he never really questioned them. Nor on the other hand did he cut beneath them, as Babbitt and More were doing, into a deeper and more cosmopolitan ethic. What he did was to modify or mollify his New-England *mores* in the light of what he learned from Franklin, Whitman, Arnold, Pater, Meredith and Stevenson. For these writers, along with Hawthorne and Emerson, he had a warm and old-fashioned devotion. In brief, he was a late, brilliant, academic devotee of nineteenth-century idealism, particularly in its American form and with Emerson as its central luminary.

Hence his second volume, *Americans*. In a certain academic sense it is indeed, as Professors Zeitlin and Woodbridge say, "substantial". But in the critical sense it is not "solidly based" nor has it "rare penetration", for its critical outlook is obsolete at a number of crucial points. Otherwise it is an excellent introduction to American literature and tradition. It is a series of clear, vigorous and devoted expositions. But on the whole it is

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

text-booky. Its style lacks the fine irony that fascinates the reader in the best of Sherman's writings and that constituted one of his main charms as a man among men. His personal charm is admirably brought out in the *Life*. Why did the authors not feel the lack of it in *Americans*? Because in approaching this volume they submerged their critical sense—as Sherman himself had done.

He did so preëminently in approaching Emerson. His essay on Emerson was "conceived in the interest of the gospel of democracy, and he put more work into it than into anything of that length he had ever written". It has some excellent qualities; but in the upshot it is hopelessly naïve. After reading it one feels the need of recurring to C. E. Norton's treatment of the same subject in his *Letters*, which had appeared ten years earlier. Norton loved Emerson and fully appreciated his greatness as an American writer. Yet in the end he found him "the most innocent, the most inexperienced of men who have lived in and reflected on the world . . . he is not one of the universal men in a large sense, but a man of some universal sympathies and relations curiously and instructively hampered by local, provincial bonds". This is precisely the point at which Emerson must be discounted if the authority of his noble qualities is to be maintained for the more sophisticated and cosmopolitan America of the twentieth century. But in the face of this new America, and indeed for its very sake, Sherman tried to maintain entire the ideally universal Emerson who continued to flourish in the late-Romantic academic mind. Sherman was discipular of the Emersonian naïveté and happy confusion. Therefore one need not be surprised to find him a little later (in his essay on W. C. Brownell) praising Norton and quoting from him with approval this sentence on Emerson: "He was the friend and helper of America's youth; but for the difficulties and struggles of its manhood *we need the wisdom of the reflective and rational understanding*, not that of the intuitions". The italics are Sherman's. He did not pause to reflect that he was here bringing in a witness against his own essay on Emerson. Why bother about consistency? Emerson did not.

The opening and closing pieces in *Americans*, which serve, says the *Life*, "to define Sherman's central position", miss fire, at least in the re-reading, just because his central position was now so shaky. Both are clever but neither is clever enough. In ultimate tone the skit on Mencken is sputtery and the one on More is falsetto. Neither journalistic radicalism nor radical humanism could be daffed aside so easily as Sherman had come to fancy. Mencken was the symbol of a more valid discontent with the American "Nordic" tradition than Sherman perceived. As for More, Sherman here urged him to discover that "the average man is, like himself, at heart a mystic, vaguely hungering for a peace that diplomatists cannot give, obscurely seeking the permanent amid the transitory". But More was already acquainted with that fact. The real question at issue was, and is, this: how may *criticism* best proceed to clear the way for the average man toward that true peace, that sense of permanence amid the transitory? Sherman's proposal, in the same paragraph, is that the critic should become more warmly aware of the virtues of the average man and of the "religion of democracy". This is good nineteenth-century doctrine. Even diplomatists have now accepted it. But it has proved entirely inadequate precisely as a means of bringing to the average man "the peace that diplomatists cannot give".

Mr. More, on the other hand, had been proposing in his writings that those who influence the average man, the leaders of opinion, should severely revise and deepen their own moral ideas. Sherman was right in the preface of his first volume when he called More "one of the most penetrating moralists of our times", and approved, with proper reservations, his epigram on Goethe's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Faust. Commenting upon Goethe's representation of the devil as the spirit that denies, More had declared that the spirit that denies is God. "I do not recall any single utterance from living lips," wrote Sherman, "that has impressed me as more profoundly illuminating." Well, if he had thought this matter through he would have decided that Emerson to a considerable extent, and democracy to a very great extent, had discarded the God who denies; and that there could be no firm way of Peace for the average man until his leaders had rediscovered this aspect of deity, this restrictive and humbling function of the spiritual Will.

However, I cannot find that, after his first fine careless rapture, Sherman gave this matter any serious attention. More's "profoundly illuminating" epigram could not have illuminated him very profoundly. The gleam was doused, I think, by the tide of general approval that met the position he assumed in *Americans*. Accepting the general feeling that More and Babbitt were "too negative", he lost his former conviction that their Nay was not ultimately devilish. "In their ultimate position," he wrote in a hot and revealing letter of January 13, 1923, "they are both dogmatic and mystical, to an extent that makes it impossible for one to understand or follow them, to say nothing of expounding them." This is a valid confession. The "ultimate position" here alluded to is a very old one and has often been followed and expounded. But Sherman did not grapple with it steadily, in the writings either of Babbitt and More or of earlier and more genial humanists, such as Plato, Spenser and Arnold, whom he admired. It is finally clear from the *Life* that he moved further and further away from a grave study of humanism.

What moved him, he thought, was the call of democratic America. In the crucial letter quoted above he rightly declared: "There is no question at the present time requiring more thinking, calling for a more definite stand, and demanding more *explicit* expression from the man of letters than precisely the question: What does democracy mean to me? A failure to deal honestly and intelligently with that question strikes me as a failure at pretty nearly the most important task of critical leadership". In the following year appeared Babbitt's *Democracy and Leadership*. This book has serious faults, but also it has precisely the qualifications enumerated by Sherman above. One finds him reading it in a period of quite exceptional leisure, during a voyage to England after resigning from the University of Illinois and before taking up his editorial duties in New York. But one does not find any significant reflections on his part, then or later, either for or against it. A reflective reader who has at heart the best interests of America should turn to Babbitt's chapter on "Democracy and Standards" and pause upon the passage beginning, "We come here to another opposition that is one of first principles and is therefore not subject to mediation or compromise —the opposition between the doctrine of the saving remnant and that of the divine average". Then he should read Sherman's almost contemporary essay, "Towards an American Type". Here the opposed doctrines of the "saving remnant" and the "divine average" are effectually confused. In the closing passage the confusion becomes damnable in a cheap and false parallel of St. Paul's "altar to the unknown God" with the "thronged altar" of present American democracy.

Elsewhere, in the course of one of his delightful attacks on Eastern American snobbery, Sherman asserts, "I do not believe in the saving remnant unless it is saving". Properly, I think, the term "saving-remnant" should be written as a noun with a hyphen in its middle; in which case the above witticism would be equivalent to saying, "I do not believe in an oak-tree unless it is an oak-tree". This is a sound credo. But the believer, especially if he happens to be a very gifted and influential critic, should proceed to clear his mind as to the qualities denoted by "oak"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the activities implied by "saving". Sherman omitted such clarification. Therefore with an easy conscience and a pleasant zest he was able to write *My Dear Cornelia*. This popular book, a reed rather than an oak, takes a hand in damning, I think, rather than in saving the democratic culture of America. For instance, the author's most explicit idea in regard to Prohibition seems to be that in a nation devoted to automobiling, drunkenness is too dangerous. Very true. But in a nation devoted to democracy, the most fearful danger is the mental and moral dishonesty exhibited by Prohibition. This fact should surely have been insisted upon by the author, as a saving member of the saving-remnant. In general, Sherman did not fulfil with entire accuracy his own prescription.

My Dear Cornelia was written for the *Atlantic Monthly*. Of late this journal has relinquished to other journals that intellectual leadership in America which it once held. But it has not done this overtly. It has endeavored, if I may again cite a useful epigram, "to combine within itself the two Babbitts". A magazine may cater legitimately to both the few and the many if it overtly offers different levels of value in its contents. But generally speaking the *Atlantic* of the twentieth century has sought a single level. It has wished to appeal to the saving-remnant and to all the sheep of the house of Israel in one and the same idiom. It has wished the sheep to feel, without changing their customary and easy posture, that they too are shepherds. Thus has arisen that pleasant prodigy known as "the *Atlantic* style". A juster name might be "the Atlantic-and-Pacific style". It is too smart for homely strength and too simple for strong distinction. Well, in Sherman's *Life* one watches with a horrid fascination the gradual drawing together of him and the *Atlantic*. The influence of the editor, Mr. Sedgwick, grows strong upon the impressible critic. "In their outlook upon the American scene," we are told, "the two men saw almost eye to eye. Both were in sympathy with democratic forces and both desired to preserve an aristocratic principle of taste within the democracy." Doubtless it was this principle of taste that shaped the culminating passage on religion in *My Dear Cornelia*: "Then I said, with my ultimate effort: Cornelia, when one goes out at the church door, one enters the universe. The only blessed mood that I know, comes when I feel that all the universe is holy". And so on.

However, *Cornelia* had no sequel, though the *Atlantic* kept wooing Sherman to produce one. It is happily clear that he soon became subconsciously dissatisfied with the milk-and-cinnamon manner of aristo-democracy. The select mediocrity of decadent Bostonese was crowded out of his affections by the mediocre selectness of literary New York. Moreover, the growing influence upon him of W. C. Brownell was tonic, though not exactly curative, for his taste. His delightful letters to his new patron are perhaps the most striking example of Sherman's tendency to adopt unwittingly the very idiom of a correspondent who interested and influenced him. Unfortunately the mood of diffusive tolerance that mastered Brownell in his closing years had the effect of reconfirming the younger critic in his academic democratism. But the fact is that Sherman did not take this doctrine quite so seriously as he thought he did. His attitude toward American equalitarianism resembled that of Disraeli toward British Toryism, so admirably noted by Sherman: "The inexhaustible fun which Disraeli offers to the student consists in contrasting the nervous, subtle, highly civilized intellectual that he was with the representative English country gentleman that he affected to be". Sherman was not affected. He could be simply sincere because he was so very deficient in critical self-survey. Yet his later writings offer to a sympathetic and discerning reader the sort of fun suggested above—the fun of contrasting the representative democrat that Sherman thought he wanted to be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the brilliant Protean essayist that he actually was.

It seems that he was in the main a personal rather than a critical essayist. And his later works, *Genius of America, Points of View, The Main Stream, Critical Woodcuts,* though lacking the concentration of *Americans,* are on the whole better literature. They have far more personal distinction. They gave free play to his ranging moods and observations, and to his rare gift for the dramatic etching of diverse personalities. Wherever his writing has real distinction, this is due to the personal freshness, so to speak, of his common sense and comic vision. For instance, in the quietly devastating sketch of Samuel Butler, who was "far more learned than any other English author in the psychology of impiety". Or in the bland moralizing of the address on "Vocation", wherein the worn ideal of "service to mankind" is reformed in a slyly wholesome fashion. Or in the laughing observations "On Falling in Love" and "On Falling in Hate", where it appears that the real theme of the typical mid-Western novel of free love is free hate. Or in the happy essay on "Literature and the Government of Men", where our current fear of "the *dead* hand of the past" is rendered absurdly superstitious, and American democratism is subordinated (ah, Sherman!) to the "natural and entirely free aristocracy of letters where no man has any power whatever but the power of his own spirit upon other spirits".

Ever and anon, to be sure, a soft ninth wave of vague humanitarian sympathy swamps the critic's good sense. For example, in his essays on Sherwood Anderson, D. H. Lawrence, and Willa Cather, which he placed with curious indiscretion at the beginning of *Critical Woodcuts*—perhaps to ingratiate current readers by showing them at the outset how much in tune he could be with current writers. The result is that the reader, unless permanently "current", is tempted to drop the book at the beginning. For here the critic's judgment is vacillating, his comic vision muddy and his style dull. Not dull, however, is the opening passage on Lawrence—"a shag of hair across the forehead, eyes alert, defiant, glinting like a squirrel's, snubby nose sniffing the air, and a big bush of a beard . . . worn out of reverence for the Dark Gods which inhabit the Dark Forest of one's own being". Let the reader therefore take heart of grace and persist for eighty pages. Then he will come across a luminous exposition of how H. G. Wells in his youth was influenced to adopt a biased view of life: "Mid-Victorian society, as the young Wells envisaged it, gazing from somewhere not far from its lower stratum, was a substance in which he seemed to be fixed like a fly at the bottom of a pan of cold mutton tallow". Here the reader is won; and no subsequent wave of *warm* tallow (Shermanly speaking) can entirely frizzle his interest in the book. In the admirable essay on Boswell the reader will feel like applying to the critic himself his encomium of Boswell's art: "he has a most extraordinary faculty for taking in and giving forth again all the elements in a situation which constitute its life". In general, Sherman's latest writings are graphic appendices to his distinguished book of criticism, *On Contemporary Literature.*

The fact emerging from his total career is that his native ironic good sense, early reinforced as it was by the influence of Babbitt and More, exerted a continual and creative pull-back upon the diffusive impressibility that he shared with his contemporaries. Otherwise he would have disappeared head first into impressionism. He would perhaps have fulfilled his recurrent desire to write novels, and no doubt they would have been even less memorable than the average effusion of the time. He perused a vast mass of current fiction with unflagging gusto. He read and re-read H. G. Wells! Greater love for his time hath no man than this. Indeed, the passing day engaged the real chivalry that was prominent in Sherman's nature. As a boy of twelve, near to death from thirst in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Arizona desert, he gave his last share of water to save the life of an infant. As a man of forty, he devoted his latest energies to the appreciation of an infantile literature, and in a way he saved its life. Much of it will continue to live only in his essays upon it, and because he interpreted it in the light of a broad, healthy spirit. He salted much perishable stuff with his inimitable good spirits and sharp friendly irony. The most significant irony of the situation is this: a whole menagerie of current writers, confined to a small round of decadent notions and devoted to the sensation of a dismal vitality, snarling at everything normal, cheerful, or established, came in the end to lick the hand of a joyous academic apostle of common sense. Sherman fully earned the acclamations that came to him from the diverse American camps of the War Age. He showed his contemporaries a vitality of common sense that they had openly disdained but secretly needed. And thus he became the most representative American prose-writer of the time. The others were too far gone in impressionism to make a representative impression. He, while his temperament was warmly engaged in the passing show, stood back a little with his mind and gave the thing some envisagement and meaning—at best, a comic meaning. He was able to do this because of his sound character and his humanistic training.

He could not dispel the firm groundliness that his two early masters had given to his outlook, though he could not or did not (God knows which) build at once firmly and originatively upon them. Hence, in his last years, his half-confessed sense of essential confusion; and hence too, I think, his heightened desire to have "no margin for meditation" between his killing labors. The vague hybrid which he termed "democratic humanism", and which he loved or tried to love enthusiastically, blinded him to the fact that humanism can never give effectual aid to democracy unless it maintains its own proper distinction; that it has been fearfully undermined precisely by democratic forces; and that it cannot be reëstablished except by a radical revival of its essential doctrines. These doctrines are ignored, damned, or misinterpreted by the numerous post-Protestants and pseudo-scientific humanitarians who, since Sherman's death, have proclaimed themselves humanists. Chains of so-called humanistic cults have extended themselves from one end of America to the other. Well, this is "democratic humanism"! Sherman helped to father it; but I think that his best spirit disclaims it. The plain truth is that humanism *for the sake of* democracy has to be, not a democratic humanism, but a radical humanism. In his hapless essay on "The Point of View in American Criticism" (1922), Sherman advocates a "redintegration of the national will on the basis of a genuinely democratic humanism, recognizing as its central principle the duty of bringing the whole body of the people to the fullest and fairest human life of which they are capable". The duty recognized in the closing words is great, obvious, and perennial—for aristocrats and for democrats alike. But how is it to be fulfilled in twentieth-century America? How is a humane "redintegration of the national will" to be effected? Earlier in the same curious essay the right answer is suggested. The educated members of "the younger generation" must find the way, and lead the way, to a genuinely human happiness. They must find and accept its proper bounds and bonds. "What they deeply crave," says Sherman superbly, "is a binding generalization of philosophy or religion or morals which will give direction and purpose, which will give channel and speed, to the languid diffusive drift of their lives." It is exactly this sort of "binding generalization" that Sherman failed to find; that "democratic humanism" is too shallow to afford; and that radical humanism, letting the world go by, must laboriously try to build.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PATRON SAINT OF FEMINISTS

THE FOURTH OF THE RABELAIS SERIES EMPHASIZES SOME MILITANT LADIES

by Albert Jay Nock

One does not wander around Poitiers for any length of time without discovering that it is a first-rate starting-point for some researches in feminism. When our feminists develop the historic sense—or maybe one had better put it as the brokers do, "if, when and as"—one might expect Poitiers to become another Mecca, with the church of St.-Hilaire serving as a sort of Masjid-al-harām. It will be odd to see latter-day feminists interested in a church, since they now mostly regard the church as an enemy to the cause. So in fact it has been ever since the fag-end of the Middle Ages, though this does not mean necessarily that the church has anything against women as a sex. But the under dog is even more likely to be a heretic in economics than in theology, and therefore his spiritual pastors and masters have to stretch their function a bit to keep him from doing damage; *est boni judicis ampliare jurisdictionem.*

In the first five centuries of our era, however, the strong-headed lady who was out for "freedom to live her own life" found that the church supplied her only chance to get it. When she had looked over the matrimonial market and whatever other prospects there were in sight and found them uninteresting, she betook herself to a nunnery. If she were a princess, or were otherwise advantageously placed, she might establish a convent of her own. As a measure of emancipation, this seems more or less a choice between the fire and the frying-pan, but there is abundant evidence that it was not so. The history of these institutions is most striking in its revelation of the astonishingly large margin of one's personal life that one was left free to regulate for oneself. Apart from certain routine duties which do not seem to have been too onerous, one might do pretty well as one liked. Doubtless a woman was much freer under the intelligent discipline of a medieval nunnery than she is under the unintelligent pressure of public opinion in an American town. Economic independence counted largely then, of course, as it does now.

Our old friend Ste.-Radegonde qualifies without any serious competition, I think, as the patron saint of feminism, and it is reverence for her memory that should bring all modern feminists and their votive offerings to Poitiers. Radegonde was a Thuringian princess, born about A.D. 520, gently reared and highly educated, knowing Latin and Greek as well as she knew her mother tongue, and thoroughly acquainted with both Roman and Greek literature. She was married off according to the tradition peculiar to the two trades of kingship and stock-raising, to Clotaire, King of Soissons, son of the great Frankish king, Clovis, who had just consolidated a large part of Gaul into a realm that still bears the name of his ré-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gime, the country of the Franks, or France. Clotaire, however, was a poor lot, a diligent and painstaking assassin, quarrelsome, coarse, untrustworthy, an all-round lowlife. The only thing history has against Radegonde is that she put up with him for twenty years. At the end of that time, however, he arranged for her young brother's assassination. Why he refrained from doing it himself is not clear; he may have been too busy at the moment with more pressing duties in the same line. Radegonde left him, came to Poitiers, and established a double-barrelled monastery, one side for women and the other for men, under the same roof. This may have been the first of its kind, but others afterwards followed the same arrangement.

While it was building, she lived in the church property of St.-Hilaire because it had the right of sanctuary, and Clotaire could not kidnap her as long as she remained within—something like prisoner's base. This was another good feature of the church in those days. It established a number of these sanctuaries here and there on its domains, reasonably accessible to any sort of refugee, whatever his crime, convicted or unconvicted, and it was "no fair" to seine him out. Thus the mob spirit had time to cool down, and there were fewer lynchings, also less of the third degree, railroading, trial by newspaper, and such like. The church ought to revive this practice in the United States, with sanctuaries not too far apart; half a mile would probably be about right to start with, until the public got used to it.

When the new monastery was completed, Radegonde moved there and proceeded to make herself a power in the land; letters, politics, Merovingian diplomacy and the social life of the kingdom, all felt her sway. Clotaire finally died, much behind his schedule, and the efforts to adjust the claims of his successors resulted in an anarchy that would have been much worse but for her enlightened influence. She did not take the leadership of her convent—she groomed a friend named Agnes for that executive job and left herself foot-loose, thus evincing a wisdom that is beyond praise. She linked herself to the twentieth century by building baths in her convent, and the executive Agnes had to see to it that they were used, though in an emergency Radegonde was not above lending a hand. Once, for instance, a nun got sick, and Radegonde cured her by soaking her for two hours in a hot bath. An eleventh century picture in the municipal library at Poitiers attests this cure, which, no doubt, was regarded as a miracle, by reason of its unusual and subversive features.

There is much more to say about Radegonde, but perhaps this is enough to remind our feminists that she deserves their interest. Perhaps, too, the following incident will show them that pre-war Pankhurstians and our own Woman's Party are not alone in pointing out the way to glory, but that the sixth-century feminist was some huckleberries in two-fisted militant methods herself. Two years after Radegonde's death, a brace of dissatisfied princesses left her convent and started on the warpath; their reasons are not precisely clear—perhaps things were too quiet and there was not enough doing, especially since there were so many lively happenings outside just then. One of these princesses, Chrodhilde, put herself at the head of a troop of armed rapscallions and sacked the town; the streets of Poitiers ran red with blood, and it took an immense amount of force and diplomatic pressure to subdue the insurrection. Even so, Chrodhilde did not surrender; she escaped, and having had her sprightly little fling, she lived on its memories at a comfortable distance ever after. This enterprise is still known as the Nun's War, and it is mentioned with uneasy respect in the Poitou to this day.

Women in the Middle Ages regularly bore arms and seemed as handy with them as anybody. The phenomenon of Jeanne d'Arc did not impress the populace as anything much to be wondered at, except perhaps for

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the supernatural direction that she claimed for her activities, though such claims upon the God of Battles were no more uncommon then than they are now. Even as late as the middle of the sixteenth century, Louise Labé, born at Lyons in 1526, seems to have become bored by life on Main Street as the daughter of a rich cloth-merchant, so she reached down the gun, figuratively speaking, set forth and fought through the siege of Perpignan just as a sort of "flyer", you might say, or as the New Englanders put it, just to be "a-doing". There seems to have been no motive of high-pressure patriotism behind her. Then she went back to Lyons, married, and devoted herself to writing the best poetry produced by any woman in all her brilliant age, even making a distinguished success with the sonnet-form, which was something brand-new in French letters. She was a good scholar, knowing Greek, Latin, Italian and Spanish, a good musician, and had uncommonly fine social gifts; and since Lyons was at that time the cultural center of France, she made a distinguished place for herself at the very top of the heap. At the outset of this paragraph I took an iron-clad resolve not to quote, but the recollection of this sonnet breaks it down:

Ne reprenez, dames, si j'ai aimé;
Si j'ai senti mille torches ardentes,
Mille travaux, mille douleurs mordantes,
Si en pleurant j'ai mon bien consumé
Las que mon nom m'en soit par vous blamé.
Si j'ai failli, les peines sont présentes,
N'aigrissez point leurs pointes violentes;
Mais estimez qu'amour a point nommé.
Sans votre ardeur d'un Vulcain excuser,
Sans la beauté d'Adonis accuser,
Pourra, s'il veut, plus vous rendre amoureuses,
Et ayant moins que moi d'occasion,
Et plus d'étrange et forte passion.
Et gardez-vous d'être plus malheureuses.

French literature, or for that matter, any other literature, shows precious few elegiac poets who can beat that. The reader of Rabelais, if he be at all imaginative (and if he be not, he had better not read him), finds that the sight of Poitiers is an irresistible lure towards a long excursion in the history of feminism. The subject was rife in Rabelais's own day. It had an extensive literature long before the invention of printing, and in the first half-century afterwards it spawned a shoal of books. Even the great Erasmus could not quite keep himself off the topic, and Rabelais, in his account of Panurge's marriage, gives up practically the whole of the Third Book to it. Some woman—since the literary world seems pretty well given over to women—some woman of ability, industry, culture, leisure, humor and imagination, capable of taking as detached and objective view of the subject as Rabelais had of it, could have a rare good time running it down through French history, say from Ste.-Radegonde to Anne of Brittany. What a book that would make!—but the woman who could make it is sadly to seek, I am afraid; I know I don't want the job of hunting for her.

St. Hilary of Poitiers is a great figure in ecclesiastical circles as a fine old fundamentalist who made Poitiers orthodox, nominally at any rate, in the middle of the fourth century. His church, where Radegonde took sanctuary, has been here ever since that time, torn down every now and then and rebuilt, variously tinkered and "restored", until nothing is left that antedates the eleventh century. I say nothing, though fragments of the original chapel built by Hilary as a burial-place do still exist under the nave of the present church. Since they cannot be seen, however, they might almost as well not be there. The main interest that the man of letters has in the "plant" of St.-Hilaire is in the deanery adjacent to the church. This was built by Rabelais's old and good friend Geoffroy d'Estissac, bishop of Maillezais and dean of St.-Hilaire, with whom Rabelais made his home for some time. There still remain a façade that he put up and some other structural details; the building now houses a normal school.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The structure most intimately associated with Rabelais's memory was destroyed in 1788, not by revolutionists or zealots but by the caprice of the last proprietor. This was the château of Bonivet, built near Poitiers in a very ineligible situation, by Guillaume Gouffier, better known as Admiral de Bonivet. He put it up to take the shine out of the Constable de Bourbon's fine place at Châtellerault, but did not live to enjoy his triumph, for he was killed in the battle of Pavia, and his château was not actually completed for more than a century. Its literary interest is that it was undoubtedly the first of these princely edifices that Rabelais ever saw, and that it furnished him with his general architectural design for the Abbey of Thélème.

The passage describing this abbey and what went on within it is probably the finest in all of Rabelais's great work; it occurs at the end of the First Book. When the Picrocholine War is over, Grangousier distributes various landed proprieties among his lieutenants, but finds that Friar John is not interested in anything he has to offer. Grangousier proposes to make him abbot of Seuilly, St.-Florent, or even of Bourgeuil, but he replies with admirable logic that he has never learned to govern himself and hence does not see how he could govern other people. If Grangousier is willing, however, he would like to found an abbey of his own, on an entirely new principle whereby its inmates should not need any governing except by the innate human sense of honor and propriety. Grangousier consents willingly, and Rabelais proceeds with a minute description of the new abbey's architecture, which is practically that of Bonivet, and then of the communal life of the inmates. So it is worth the amateur's while to examine the extant pictures of Bonivet in order to get an idea of what the Abbey of Thélème was meant to look like.

Thélème was an archetypal co-ed affair; men and women inhabited it on equal terms and associated together in complete equality, apparently, and also in unlimited freedom. Rabelais represents the women as quite up to the men in every point of intelligence and character; at least I have never been able to find any hint of disparagement in his narrative, or to see any implications of inequality. On the strength of the Third Book, however, critics all but unanimously put him down as an anti-feminist and as entertaining very low views of woman's place in nature. This seems gratuitous. It is unlikely that in the Third Book he took the current manifestations of either feminism or anti-feminism at all seriously—well, who could? The literature of the controversy shows them to have been immensely diverting—and that is all that a person blessed with any humor could say of them or make of them; and in Rabelais's account of Panurge's matrimonial project one would say he merely reflected that view. However, even if he is to be judged mechanically by the sentiments that his characters express, why should one make fish of him in the First Book and flesh in the Third?

Rabelais mentions the great hall in the Palais de Justice, the *parloir aux bourgeois* which in his time was fringed with booths or stands of small merchants. This was used for all sorts of social purposes, such as occasional fêtes, assemblies and stage-plays, and regularly for lawsuits. It is still here, just about as he left it, except that the booths are gone. In the forty-first chapter of the Third Book, Rabelais speaks of this hall and gives incidental testimony to the Poitevin mania for going to law. At Smarve, a little hamlet near Ligugé and something over five miles from Poitiers, there lived an honest man of humble station, named Perrin Dendin, who had unofficially arbitrated more differences than were disposed of "in the court-house of Poitiers, the auditory of Montmorillon and the hall of the old Parthenay", all put together. Rabelais also recalls another bygone glory of Poitiers, the belfry standing opposite the church of Nôtre-Dame-la-Grande, which the old views of the city show as a dominant

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

feature, probably the tallest structure in town; it became shaky and was pulled down in 1815. Pantagruel noticed the great bell in this tower, as his father Gargantua had noticed the bells of Paris, and took it down to play pranks with at the expense of the townspeople. This was one of the biggest bells in France, weighing about nine tons, and was a present to the city from the duke Jean de Berry.

There is in all probability another very vivid reminiscence of Poitiers contained in the thirty-ninth chapter of the First Book. In his table-talk with Grangousier, still warm from his heroic exploit of defending the abbey of Seuilly's vineyard against Picrochole's marauding soldiery, Friar John wishes he might be "king of France for eighty or a hundred years; by God, I'd thrash those scuttling cowards of Pavia like bobtailed curs. Why could they not die where they stood, rather than leave their good prince in such a pinch?"

When the news of Francis I's great defeat reached France, Rabelais may have been at Lyons, but if so, he returned at once to the Poitou. In all probability he was at Poitiers with his friends from Ligugé and Fontaine-le-Comte, among the "lords of the Church, officers of justice, mayor, aldermen and citizens" who assembled at the city hall to hear the queen-regent's master of requests "sell the war", as our phrase ran a dozen years ago. The substance of this worthy's selling-talk is curiously like the kind of thing that our government's loose-tongued janizaries used to give out, and his technique of approach to the subject was much the same. He began by expounding "the causes of the war" in a fashion that no doubt turned all Tophet's derision loose on Ananias and Sapphira as rank pretenders. He apostrophized the king's behavior and explained the rout at Pavia with not a single time-honored and familiar perjury missing. Then he gave out his program of instruction, which comprised such items as organization of the Home Guards; of espionage; against hoarding and retail profiteering—

Qu'on face garde et guet en cette ville, ayant l'œil à ceux qui entreront, pour sçavoir s'ils font aucunes trainés, monopoles, machines et entèrprises.

Nevertheless the regulations against profiteering stopped at just the right place; the Food Controller knew precisely "where he got off":

Qu'on pourvoye aux vivres et envitaillement de la ville, et que ceux qui ont blés et vins en plat païs, les facent venir pour les conserver à ceux ausquels besoin en sera, au profit des seigneurs dedits blés et vins.

Just so; we have heard of something more or less like that in our time. Was it Henry Adams who remarked how much better it is to be historically-minded than historically-learned? It may have been Henry Adams—I do not know—but whoever made the remark might also have observed how much more unusual it is. Rabelais was historically-minded; he took this situation in, apparently, without any loss to speak of, and when he got around to write the Prologue to the Third Book, he sketched the behavior of Diogenes among the Corinthians in the war against Philip of Macedon. The sketch is far too long to quote, but if the reader thinks he can bless himself with any pretence to historical-mindedness, he should by all means look it up and read it; he will be well rewarded for his trouble. In the cause of peace, that story of Diogenes would be worth a thousand "conferences" of political harlequins and scoundrels, if people only knew how to think about what they read.

A year after Pavia, the queen-regent and Marguerite of Navarre—mother and sister of Francis I—stopped at Poitiers on their way to Spain to get the royal prisoner out of pawn. Rabelais then was still in the Poitou, and it is quite conceivable that he once again dropped into Poitiers to get a look at the gifted Marguerite. Later he dedicated the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Third Book to her, but not out of romance or sentiment for her *beaux yeux*, such notions not being much in his line. All this sort of thing would work up very well into a nice slushy chapter of popular buckeye biography, but the prosaic fact is that Marguerite had got her brother to issue Rabelais a copyright, and the obligation was repaid in the conventional way. Rabelais managed dutifully to churn out a dedicatory dizain of the very worst poetry that any one can imagine, and the account was square.

The mention of Louise of Savoy and her daughter Marguerite turns one's mind back again upon the subject of feminism. It seems to have been the men who got up all the tootle over feminism in those days. The women had precious little to say; no doubt they sized up the controversy for just about what it was worth, and welcomed it as something in the way of innocent diversion which might perhaps help them out a little with the grinding task that has been woman's ever since apple-time in Eden—keeping their menfolk out of mischief, and cleaning up after them when they have got into mischief. It strikes me that the genuine eighteen-carat, self-starting, all-wool male feminist is the man who leaves as little as possible of this sort of thing for womankind to do, let his words range how they may. In the light of this idea Rabelais seems to have been a good feminist, for it would appear that all his life he gave female society an uncommonly large letting-alone. A study of the Renaissance's great women impresses one pretty forcibly with a sense of how their time and labor were spent in straightening things up after some numskull of a man had made a mess of them. When they spoiled a man—as Louise and Marguerite certainly spoiled Francis I—ten to one he was such a poor affair to start with that spoiling did not count. When Louis X prophesied that "the great lubber" who was to succeed him would probably ruin the kingdom, he had Francis's exact measure. No doubt Louise and Marguerite had it too and, as they rolled up their sleeves for the sorry job of housecleaning that they knew lay ahead of them, they probably thought—since Francis seems to have been quite lovable—that they would get what compensating satisfaction they could distil out of the pleasure of spoiling him.

There are some great novels to be written in the setting of these times and circumstances. Another *The Cloister and the Hearth* could be made out of looking forward and backward from Rabelais's years in the Poitou. The discouraging thing about this idea, however, is that we seem to be short another Charles Reade—short on even the most tenuous prospect of one. The mass-production of popular literature brings to mind Gresham's law: "bad money drives out good". It is as true of a debased literary currency as of any other. We shall get a good literature when we get a public intelligent enough to support it, and not before; why should we expect or hope to get it before?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A LETTER FROM ABROAD

THE DEATH OF D. H. LAWRENCE

by Rebecca West

London, March.

It is difficult to describe accurately the effect that D. H. Lawrence's death had on London. If one says that the effect was tremendous one puts into currency a suggestion of a capital in mourning, which is ludicrous. Not even among his own caste was he honored as he should have been. I myself realized with a shock how much of what I had always put down as Lawrence's persecution mania had a solid basis when I read obituaries in which not only was the homage due from the living to dead genius meanly denied, but the courtesy paid to any corpse was so far as possible withheld. "Messy stuff", was the delicate phrase bestowed by one of our greatest dailies on his poetry; he might, judging from another of them, have been a lunatic of the same sort as those who, though normal and even exceptionally gifted at most times, every now and then embarrass their friends by suddenly removing their clothes in public places. Less crass than these but just as infuriating were the articles by mediocrities whom we cannot blame for having stayed in safety, since they plainly lacked the vitality to push on the long journey to the edge of danger. They made excuses for Lawrence. It appeared to them that he saw life as a flaming mystery because he suffered from tuberculosis, though nothing seemed plainer to those who knew him best than that this malady gained its hold only because his intense perceptions had exhausted his body. It appeared to them that he wanted to crack the crust which society has allowed to form on the surface of its existence and look underneath because he was a miner's son and had an inferiority complex about the respectable. If that were true it were still not to be sneered at, for, if a creature of such quality as Lawrence found himself in a world that by its social ordinances ignored that quality, he had a right to question those ordinances. But there was so much more than that in the spiritual drama of Lawrence's life that it is not true; and the fact could hardly have emerged save to those who were seeing their subject very oddly because they were looking at it through the wrong end of field glasses, wishing that which is much greater than themselves to seem much less.

The most sympathetic obituary I have seen was a most charming note on him as a man that appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*. "I desire (if I can)," says the anonymous writer, "to correct the impression, which is widespread, that D. H. Lawrence was a madman of genius, savagely bent on violating sanctuaries, and bruising the finer conscience of his fellow-men. To defend Lawrence's passionate convictions is no part of my hasty undertaking. These do not need to be defended, only to be understood, and understood in the light of an experience extraordinary in its depths and comprehensiveness. And again

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I am not invoking the beauty of his personality to excuse his work. It is right that I should make it clear that I do not consider his work needs any excuse." It is true that the unknown goes on to say, "If it was wrong, it was passionately wrong; and to be passionately wrong is far better than to be coldly right", and leaves one with a revolted sense of chaos. *"If it was not right it was not right with attendant conditions that have no demonstrable connection with values; and to be not right in these conditions that have no demonstrable connection with values is to be more right than to be right in other conditions that also have no demonstrable connection with values."* What is wrong with our education and the temper of our intellectual world that a literate person can write a sentence that makes such a preposterous statement? But he goes on further to say what should have been said: "Lawrence was the most remarkable and most lovable man I have ever known. Contact with him was immediate, intimate and rich. When he was gay, and he was often gay—my dominant memory of him is of a blithe and joyful man—he seemed to spread a sensuous enchantment about him. By a natural magic he unsealed the eyes of those in his company; birds and beasts and flowers became new-minted as in Paradise; they stood revealed as what they were, and not the poor objects of our dull and common seeing. The most ordinary domestic act—the roasting of a joint of meat, the washing up of crockery, the painting of a cottage room—in his doing became a gay sacrament".

* * *

Since this is the meagre harvest that his genius reaps from contemporary fame, it might be supposed that the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was right in the leader it published the other day, which claimed with a sneer that Lawrence was better appreciated in Germany than in England. Yet it is not so. The grief caused by his death proves far otherwise. I do not speak of his friends and his intimates. They had all reason to regret him for purely selfish reasons. Such a gay companion as the writer in *The Times Literary Supplement* delineates is not easily replaced; and he was also a great friend. "He was completely generous. At a moment when there were not ten pounds between him and destitution he thrust five of them upon a friend and, because the friend refused them, flew into a transport of high-pitched rage."

It was not only with his money he was generous. He had *caritas*. That which was needed had to be given. These things in him would explain the grief of his friends; but another explanation, which can lie only in his genius, must be found for the effect his death had on those who had never set eyes on him. I know nobody of middle age or less, above a certain standard of intellectual integrity or imaginative vigor, who is not stricken by his loss. It was well put by a young man, a critic and a poet, who said to me the other day, "I've felt rather ill ever since Lawrence died". There is the general malaise one feels after a severe shock, after a loss that cannot be made good. How deep the experience goes can be measured by the attempt the mind made to refuse it; for everybody I know, and myself also, refused to believe the news when it came. The first threat of trouble I heard was between the acts of *This Way to Paradise,* a dramatization of Aldous Huxley's *Point Counterpoint*. It is not a very good play. Curiously enough, although one usually thinks of most plays that their intellectual content is pitiably below that of most novels, the dialectic stuff of this novel, which was definitely above the intellectual level of fiction to-day, seemed poorer when one heard it across the footlights than that which usually troubles the air of the theatre. This was perhaps because Aldous Huxley's novels are, for all their simulation of realism, half way to poetry. The characters and the rhythm of their appearances give an account of the space and time of the creator's mind. Young

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quarles, the intellectual who cannot satisfy his wife's need for emotion, so that she turns to Webley, the brainless man of action, represents a fantasy that vexes man with a nightmare vision of the universe assuming a thousand forms to take his potency from him. If he thinks, surely the power is draining out of him in a thin flood; but if he does not think, he still will not be able to keep his power to himself, for action will take it from him; and there are always women. Old Quarles, with his perturbed tootings: "A babah? Surely not a babah?" was the picture of the father the son makes in rebellion, the symbol of humanity that the individual makes when he desires to make the gesture of power that is his alone.

These, and all the other figures of *Point Counterpoint*, were real events in the real universe of the creator's mind, and the sequence in which they appeared revealed the creator's interpretation of that universe. It was therefore acceptable by all readers who had reached a certain level of self-consciousness, by reason of the comparison and contrasts they could find between his universe and theirs. But when these same characters and events were presented in the terrible material medium of the stage, without any disguise of poetry, one had to judge them as if they were taking place on the plane of objective reality. Then one watched the young Quarles household only to imagine how Elinor would react to the torture hardly to be described in the humanitarian pages of an Occidental publication, though the Chinese *Police Gazette* might like it, which one has long devised for all wives who interrupt their husbands when they are working to ask them if they remember those summer evenings in the garden at Wherever-it-was eight years ago; and old Quarles is exactly as significant in comparison with all the other senile libertines the stage has ever seen as his lines enable him to be. The dialectic speeches, put into the mouths of those who had diminished from real poetic creations to stage types, seemed irrelevant and papery. But certain things still stuck out as important. Profound meaning rang out through lines that bore relation to matters not transplanted from the novel into the play, like bells heard across a lake from a church hidden in the hills on the other side. One was conscious of this whenever Mark Rampion, in whom Aldous Huxley has very obviously depicted Lawrence, came on the stage. One thought, "Even Aldous Huxley, who is so far above the rest of us, feels that he has to look up to Lawrence". When the curtain fell I said as much to my companion, who answered, "You know Lawrence is dangerously ill". For no reason at all, I replied, "Oh, I don't believe that! It's quite impossible", just as lots of people equally without reason felt confidently, "There's some mistake", when they read in their newspapers about his death at Vence. What would Aldous Huxley or any of his audience have done if from *This Way to Paradise* there had suddenly been cut out the figure of Mark Rampion? All alike would have cried out that the best thing had gone. Even so did those of us who mourned feel that from the spectacle the universe had staged for us, the best thing had gone. Since we see nothing in the universe outside us which we cannot identify with what we see in the universe within us, this means that the forces which moved Lawrence seem to us the best part of our human equipment.

* * *

What were these forces? I can answer my own question most satisfactorily, I find, by referring not to his work, but to my personal acquaintanceship with him; though that was slight. One spring day, about ten years ago, I was lunching in Florence with Reggie Turner and Norman Douglas. Reggie Turner has been described by Max Beerbohm as Artemas in his paper on wits in *Yet Again*, and there is no need to add a line save to commemorate a supremely imaginative act of charity. When Oscar Wilde came out of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prison Reggie Turner sent him one of the most expensive and completely useless fitted dressing-cases that Bond Street has ever achieved. There is need to tell over again the tale of Norman Douglas's accomplishments, because the mind finds them so incredible that it has a disposition to forget them. Besides being a master of English prose, he is one of the finest classical scholars in Europe, a great linguist (he can even speak and write Russian), a superb pianist, a composer of more than ordinary interest, a caricaturist of the first rank and, as many of the villas round Capri and Naples witness, one of the masters among modern landscape gardeners.

By one of the ironies which forbids us to believe that nature is neutral, even when one has been forced to give up one's faith that she is kindly, Reggie Turner, in whose heart is innocence, wears the winking face of a devil off a quattrocento choir-stall; and Norman Douglas whose heart, so far as innocence is concerned, is as the Gobi desert, looks as one who has never seen Dr. Cadman would imagine him to look. There are what one takes as the stigmata of moral earnestness: the penetrating eyes under level brows, compressed lips, head set bullishly between the shoulders, as if here reason were firmly rooted in the moral law, and hair white as if the scalp itself had renounced all such vanity as color. And indeed there is in him an austere loyalty to an interpretation of life that might, if need pushed him to it, not balk at renunciation. Paganism is his religion. Things are what they are. If the landscape seems to form a pattern and the figure of a god to emerge, then that does but prove that the god is but a landscape seeming to form a pattern. This being so, all things are equal, and unrelated, perpetually dissolvent back to their point of least significance. Believing this, he will not forswear his belief. That day at lunch his conversation perpetually made and unmade the world till late in the afternoon; and then, though there would have seemed to an outside observer no need that we should ever move, we were entertaining each other so well, we rose to our feet. Lawrence was coming in by some slow train that crawled up from Rome laden with poor folks that could not pay for speed, and would by now be installed in his hotel. To each of us it appeared of paramount importance that we should go and pay him our respects at the first possible moment.

* * *

He was staying in a poorish hotel overlooking what seems to me, since I am one of those who are so enamored of Rome that they will not submit themselves to the magic of Florence, to be a trench of drab and turbid water wholly undeserving of the romantic prestige that we attach to the name of Arno. Make no mistake; it was the hotel that overlooked the Arno, not Lawrence. His room was one of the cheaper ones at the back. His sense of guilt that scourged him perpetually, that was the secret of his genius, since it made him inquire what sin it was which he and all mankind have on their conscience, forbade him either enjoying comfort or having the money to pay for it, lest he should weaken. It was a small, mean room in which he sat, tapping away at a typewriter. With a great laugh Norman Douglas asked him if he was already writing an article about the present state of Florence, and Lawrence answered seriously that he was. This was faintly embarrassing, because on the doorstep Douglas had described how on arriving in a town Lawrence used to go straight from the railway station to his hotel and immediately sit down and hammer out articles about the place, vehemently and exhaustively describing the temperament of the people. This seemed a silly thing to do, and here he was doing it.

Douglas's laughter rang out louder than ever, and malicious as a satyr's. But we forgot all that when Lawrence set his work aside and laid himself out to be a good host to us. He was one of the most polite people I have ever met, in both naïve and subtle ways. The

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other two knew him well, but I had never seen him before. He made friends as a child might do, by shyly handing me funny little boxes he had bought from some strange place he had recently visited; and he made friends too as the wisest old philosopher at the end of his days might do, by taking notice of one's personality, showing that he recognized its quality, and promising to let it live if one would let his live. Presently he settled down to give in a curious hollow voice, like the soft hoot of an owl, an account of the journey he had made, up from Sicily to Capri, from Capri to Rome, from Rome to Florence.

* * *

There seemed no reason why he should have made these journeys, which were all as uncomfortable as cheap travelling is in Italy. No material consideration seemed to have dictated his movement from any of these points to any other; nor was there one to explain why he was presently going to fetch up at Baden-Baden. Yet, if every word he said disclosed less and less reason for this journeying, it also disclosed a very definite purpose. These were the journeys that the mystics of a certain type have always found necessary. The Russian saint goes to the head of his family and says good-bye and takes his stick and walks out with no objective but the truth. The Indian fakir draws lines with his bare feet across the peninsula that describe a diagram the exact meaning of which eludes the uninitiated, but the general purport of which is holiness. Lawrence travelled, it seemed, to get a certain Apocalyptic vision of mankind that he registered again and again, always rising to a pitch of ecstatic agony. Norman Douglas, Reggie Turner and I, none of whom would have moved from one place to another except in the greatest comfort procurable and with a definite purpose, or have endured a disagreeable experience twice if we could possibly help it, sat in a row on the bed and nodded. We knew that what he was doing was right. We nodded, and grew entranced.

The next day Norman Douglas and I went a walk with Lawrence far out into the country, past the Certosa. It was a joy for me to leave the city, for I cannot abide trams and Florence is congested with them; it is impossible to go out a walk without feeling that one is being dogged by a moaning tram one betrayed in one's hot youth. But it had been raining so hard for days that there had been no opportunity for a country walk. Now there had been a day's sunshine, and the whole world was new. Irises rose out of the wet earth like thrusting spears; the cypresses, instead of being as at other seasons dusty pointers towards heat-cracked ground or lank funeral plumes commemorating a foundered country, were liquidly black exclamation marks, crying out at the beauty of the reborn countryside; about the grassy borders of the road there was a great deal of the fine enamel work in little flowers and weeds that one notes on the swards of Botticelli.

Of the renascent quality of the day Lawrence became an embodiment. He was made in the angelic colors: his skin, though he lived much in Southern countries, was very white, his eyes were light, his hair and beard were a pale luminous red. His body was very thin, and because of the flimsiness of his build it seemed as if a groove ran down both the center of his chest and his spine, so that his shoulder-blades stood out in an almost wing-like projection. He moved quickly and joyously. One could imagine him as a forerunner speeding faster than spring could pass from bud to bud on the bushes to tell the world of the season that was coming to save it from winter. Beside him Norman Douglas lumbered along stockily. Because he knew what Emperor had built this road and set that city on a hill about which the Etruscans had been like-minded before him he made one feel that there have been so many springs that in effect there is no spring. Bending over a filemot-colored flower that he had not met since he saw it on Mount Olympus his face grew nearly as tender as a mother bending over her child;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when a child tumbled at his feet from the terrace of an olive orchard, his face became neither more nor less tender than before. They moved in unison of pace along the road, these two, and chatted. They were on good terms then, Ormazd and Ahriman.

* * *

We stopped for lunch at a place that was called the Bridge of something: an inn that looked across a green meadow to a whitish river. We ate at a table on which a trellis of wistaria painted a shadow far more substantial than the blue mist it really was. The two men talked for long of a poor waif and stray, a bastard sprig of royalty, who had recently killed himself after a life divided between conflicting passions for monastic life, his own sex and financial fraud. He had finally sought refuge at the monastery of Monte Cassino, that nursery of European culture, where St. Thomas Aquinas himself was educated; but soon was obliged to flee down one side of the sugar-loaf mountain while the carabinieri came up the other side with a warrant for his arrest on charges relating to the Italian law of credit. Then he had gone to Malta, and played more fantasias on the theme of debt till his invention was exhausted. This was the man whose recollections of service in the French Foreign Legion were published with a preface by Lawrence which provoked Norman Douglas to a savage retort that stands high among the dog fights of literary men. But then they talked of him in amity and with that grave and brotherly pitifulness with which men who have found it difficult to accommodate themselves to their fellow men speak of those who have found it impossible. They broke off, I remember, to look at some lads who made their way across the meadow and began to strip by the river bank. "The water will be icy," said Douglas. "It won't be warm till the snow goes off the mountains." He began to chuckle at the thought of the shock that was coming to the boys whose inexperience had been tempted by the first hot day. Lawrence let his breath hiss out through his teeth at the thought of their agony; but he seemed to find pleasure in thinking of it, as he would of any kind of intense feeling.

Presently we rose and went on our way. Norman Douglas took the landlord's hand and wrung it heartily, saying a fervid goodbye. Lawrence exclaimed, "Douglas, how can you shake hands with these people!" He meant by that that the antipathy between the Northern and the Southern peoples was so great that there could be no sincere attempt at friendship with them. Douglas answered with a grin, "Oh, it takes something off the bill next time". He did not mean that. It was simply one way of saying that he would not get excited about these fine points, that in his universe every phenomenon was of equal value. We walked away. After a minute or two I looked back through the olive trees and saw the landlord standing where we had left him, sending after us a hard black Italian stare. "Do you know, Douglas," said Lawrence suddenly, though he had not looked back, "I can't help thinking that man understood English." "Oh, no," I falsely said. "I'm sure he didn't." But Douglas, laughing more deeply than ever, said, "I got that, too". We all walked along for a time without speaking, ill at ease, Ormazd and Ahriman alike did not want unnecessary explosion of the forces they knew to be latent in their universe. Then presently Lawrence began to talk of the Sicilian peasants, and how full of hatred and malice he had found them. There was much about some old crones who had come up at twilight to his house in Taormina with some jars of honey they had wanted him to buy, and had crouched down on his terrace while he tested their goods, with malignity in their eyes, in their squatting bodies. They had meant to cheat him; it was last year's honey and ill preserved. He detected the fraud in an instant, with his sturdy wisdom about household matters, and bade them begone. Silently they rose and filed out through his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

olive trees with their jars on their shoulders, with increased malignity in their eyes and in their prowling bodies, because they had not been able to cheat him. "Such villainy!" he cried, in effect. "Such black loathing. . . ." Again I felt embarrassed, as I did when we discovered him pounding out articles on the momentary state of Florence as a result of an insufficient glimpse at it. Surely he was now being almost flatly silly, even a little mad? Of course peasants try to cheat one over honey and other things, in Italy and elsewhere, and very natural it is, considering how meagrely the earth gives up its fruits. But as for villainy and black loathing, surely this is persecution mania? I was a little unhappy about it, which was a pity, for that made an unsatisfactory ending to what was to be my last meeting with Lawrence, though mercifully not my last contact with him. A few months ago I received a letter from him thanking me for some little tribute I had paid him during the trouble about his pictures in London. This letter showed me again what a man he was to marvel at, for with marvellous sensitiveness he had deduced from a phrase or two in my article that I was troubled by a certain problem, and he said words that in their affectionate encouragement and exquisite appositeness could not have been bettered if we had spent the ten years that had intervened since our meeting in the closest friendship.

* * *

The point about Lawrence's work that I have been unable to explain save by resorting to my personal acquaintanceship with him, is this: that it was founded on the same basis as those of his actions which then seemed to me ridiculous, and which now, as the result of increased experience, I think proceeding in a straight line to the distant goal of wisdom. He was tapping out an article on the state of Florence at that moment without knowing enough about it to make his views on the subject of real value. Is that the way I looked at it? Then I was naïve. He was writing about the state of his own soul at that moment, which, since our self-consciousness is so incomplete, and since in consequence our vocabulary also is so incomplete, he could only render in symbolic terms; and the city of Florence was as good a symbol as any other.

If he was foolish in taking the material universe and making allegations about it that were true only of the universe within his own soul, then Rimbaud was a great fool also; and St. Augustine also, who in *The City of God* writes an attack on the pagan world which is historically and morally negligible so long as it is regarded as an account of events on the material plane, but which is beyond price as an account of the conflict in his own soul between that which he felt tended to life and that which he felt tended to death; and Dante who made Heaven and Hell to show what his portion had been on this earth. He was, in fact, like every great artist who has felt the urgency to describe the unseen so keenly that he has rifled the seen of its vocabulary and diverted it to that purpose; and it took courage to do that in a land swamped with naturalism as England was when Lawrence began to write. And when he cried out at Douglas for shaking hands with the innkeeper because the North and South were enemies, and when he saw the old crones who had come to do a little harmless necessary cheating over the honey as Mænads too untamed in their venom to be flamboyant, he was doing justice to the seriousness of life. If one has the dislike for any proof that the universe has structure which is the mark of an incoherent mind, one will find something very distasteful in his assumption that John Smith and Giovanni Giacoso are not merely individuals, but have a relationship to certain established systems which inevitably come into conflict, and that the old women were not merely attempting to divert half a dozen lire from the pockets of Mr. Lawrence to themselves but were

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

manifesting an instinct for sadism that runs right through human activity and is a factor in all events. But one will find them reassuring and invigorating if one is one of those inheritors of tradition who realize that the best of man has always recognized that the mind which is his house is on fire and that the conflagration must be put out if we are not all to perish. Then one will rejoice that our age produced one artist who had the earnestness of the patristic writers.

This claim of his to our reverence and gratitude was not forfeited by his *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. It is, if one comes to think of it, an appalling fact, fraught with the utmost danger, that man should speak of the functions on which depend the continued existence of his species and the tender life of the heart in words that cause shame and ugly laughter when they are spoken. When Lawrence's pity was aroused by this sad wound in the side of life he did what saints do: he asked for a miracle. He laid sex and those base words for it on the salver of his art and held it up before the consciousness of the world, which was his way of approaching creation, and prayed that both might be transmuted to the highest that man could use. There are many people like myself who felt that his prayer was vain: that those words were nothing but the instruments of hatred felt by the will to die for the will to live, and that they could only be dealt with when the will to die was brought into a proper relationship with the will to live. But people like myself are infinitely lesser than Lawrence. The presumption is that he was nearer the truth than we are. What he gave us in his work, as I am able to measure by looking back at our meeting and seeing the change in my attitude towards it, was that neither in this nor in any other matter did he underrate the gravity of the human situation.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROADSIDE MEETINGS OF A LITERARY NOMAD

VII. EDITORS OF THE NINETIES—SOUTHERN NOVELISTS—THE KLONDIKE

by Hamlin Garland

THE PLAYERS was a great place at which to drop in for breakfast in the late nineties and the early years of the new century. And indeed it still is one of the most friendly and interesting haunts in New York. It was there, over coffee and rolls, that I frequently sat with Edmund Clarence Stedman whose "Pan in Wall Street" and "Creole Lover's Song" still endure to prove him a fine poet.

Stedman's home was out of the city but he usually came to town for the winter. He was growing gray and his face was often worn and sad. He complained continually of overwork and often spoke of a pain in the back of his head, keeping his hand pressed against it as if to relieve the ache; but he seemed to *enjoy* the thought of his serious condition. "It is my heart," he said; "I expect to fall dead some day."

Unlike Howells, he spoke openly of his troubles, of his sickness and of his discontent with his home. He characterized his work on the stock exchange as "mere gambling". His manner impressed me as that of a poet driven to imperil his life in every way in the war of business—yet enjoying it. Sprightly, airy, not too refined, a boy with the boys, he refused to grow old.

He had a house in Lawrence Park, some fifteen miles north of the city, and I sometimes went out there on Sundays. In his study he was wholly admirable. I forgot his work as stockbroker and his stories at the club, and honored him as a scholarly and charming man of letters as he sat behind his desk surrounded by treasured portraits, manuscripts and letters. He knew almost every distinguished writer in England and America, by correspondence at least, and his judgments on the whole were sound. There was nothing malicious or bitter in his criticism. Like Gilder and Howells he desired to be helpful and was especially hospitable to young poets. Perhaps, like Howells, he sometimes took promise for achievement, but our verse writers needed just such an advocate at this time. That a man so fine, so learned in letters as he, should be forced to descend into Wall Street and fight for money with which to keep the roof above his books and manuscripts was sadly disconcerting.

Notwithstanding his aphasia, his memory for poetry was amazing. He could quote, and did quote, long passages from all the poets and essayists he most admired, a faculty which Howells apparently did not possess. Howells seldom quoted anything and never to make display of his reading, which was wide and thoughtful. He belonged to the modern type of literary man who has no need to illustrate his point by quoting from another author or from another language.

Stedman was naturally much beloved by Southern writers for he had been generous in his estimate of their work. In *The Poets of*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

America, he had given adequate space to Timrod, Haynes, Lanier, Poe and other men whom other Northern critics had minimized; and he had been quick to praise James Lane Allen, Thomas Nelson Page, George W. Cable and others of the younger Southern novelists. His influence was altogether helpful to authorship. To me, he was one of the saving graces of New York. Like Gilder and Howells he stood for plain living and high thinking quite as distinctly as Emerson and Lowell had done in their time, and held an even clearer notion of what American literature and art should become.

With a similar high standard of workmanship, Henry M. Alden was editing *Harper's Magazine*. His office which was two flights up a circular iron stairway, was a queer little box of a room hardly larger than a closet, a den in which he had worked for nearly fifty years. Just large enough for a battered desk and an extra chair for a caller, its window almost touched the elevated road and when a train passed its rattling thunder made conversation difficult. Nevertheless the inhabitant of this dusty closet was a power for good in American literature. He was a kindly dragon, so low-voiced that I missed something of his monologue even when the street was quiet. For all his gentleness and remoteness he was a shrewd and practical trader when it came to dealing with an author, a curious blend of the mystic and the Yankee. With well-defined notions of what fiction should be, he let his writers know very firmly that he was editing a magazine to suit himself. And authors in discussing their work with one another often asked, "Is this the kind of thing Alden would like?"

When at leisure he was inclined to philosophize along certain lines of a foggy transcendentalism; and once when I went out to visit him in his New Jersey home, he took me to his study after dinner, and there talked and talked and talked, smoking cigar after cigar while I kept myself awake by gripping the arms of my chair and leaning forward from time to time. As near as I could understand it, he was discoursing on the mystery and the beneficence of death; but I hardly understood two connected sentences of that four-hour monologue. I comprehended the words but the argument was a mist, a bleak obscurity. I did my best to look interested and with an occasional "I see it!"—"Quite so", tried to follow him, pinching myself now and again to keep awake.

It was a torturing session and I never was more relieved in my life than when along about one o'clock he paused and remarked, with a kindly beam in his eye, "Whenever you feel like retiring—." Springing instantly to my feet I assured him that I felt very much like it, so he showed me to my room. As he said good night, I vowed never to put myself into his hands in that way again.

As an author he was of subordinate rank. His writing was dignified and weighty but without special distinction. Sitting in judgment as he did on the manuscripts of all the writers of his time, he failed to compose a book of any permanent value. Whether he was a great editor or not is debatable, but there can be no doubt as to his effect on the young writers of that day. His kindliness, his sympathy and the nobility of his taste profoundly aided in the development of a characteristic American fiction. Like Gilder, he was receptive to the vernacular whenever it was truthfully and artistically employed; but he never edited down to his readers. He bought what appealed to him and not the kind of stuff which the millions were supposed to want.

LVI

Meanwhile another editorial group was coming into power, led by Sam McClure and Edward Bok, men who believed in reaching the millions. Associated with them were John S. Phillips and Walter Page. Bok, the most successful of them all, lived in Philadelphia, and I was often an over-night guest at his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

house. It was the fashion in New York to sneer at Bok's *Ladies' Home Journal*, and professional jesters like James L. Ford made sport of its "Heart to Heart Talks" and culinary department; but this was a very superficial view of the magazine. Bok had a well-defined policy: he employed the best writers and paid them well. His *Journal* carried household hints but it also included excellent fiction (some of mine) and stood editorially for the highest ideals in social and political life. It catered to an enormous list of readers, and remained essentially aspiring. Bok and McClure, like Lorimer of the *Post*, had the will and the skill to represent the American mind. The invasion from the south of Europe had not yet colored their periodicals.

Sam McClure represented the conquering side of the editors' guild. He was all for making a magazine popular, and James L. Ford or some other wicked paragrapher reported McClure as demanding of a noted author that he make his life of Christ "a little more snappy". This may have been a wheeze but the spirit of the new editor was in this jest. The editor of the popular periodicals regarded magazines like *Scribner's*, the *Century* and the *Atlantic Monthly* with good-natured contempt. They were journals for the few—his was for the many. Striving for wider "circulation" and knowing that for every added hundred thousand readers advertising rates could be advanced, he consulted the wishes of the average reader—or the reader below the average.

Under this plan literature became an aid to trade and magazines turned into advertising bulletins. Subscribers counted for less and less, it was the news stand sale that mattered; and in the end the price of the periodical fell below the cost of its raw paper. The advertisers paid the bill. In this scheme the money paid for manuscripts was but a small item of the annual budget and the prices paid for popular material became astounding. Authors received four or five times the sums they had hitherto enjoyed.

Whether Gilder and Alden saw the end of their reign before it came I cannot say, but I think they did. They lasted well on towards 1900, maintaining themselves and their magazines side by side with the on-rushing stream of "flat magazines", supported by a diminishing list of subscribers, men and women of adult intelligence whose tastes were for the carefully considered page, content to get their news from other periodicals.

As a lover of literature I leaned to the side of Gilder and Alden, but I sold most of my stories to Bok and McClure. Corrupted without realizing it, I pretended to scorn the tempter. One day McClure turned on me. "Garland, you're on the wrong track. You despise journalism but the journalist is the man who wins. Now you can write, but you write of people and subjects that only a few care about. Why not take subjects which interest everybody? You would then stand a double chance of winning. Drop your literary pose and come in with us. Use your skill on topics of the day, or stories of big personalities and you'll make a place for yourself, as Miss Tarbell and William Allen White have done".

He was right. I knew he was right, but I refused to go over to his side. I temporized. I did a few things along his line but held on to my hope of creating something of permanent value. I had the wish to be a kind of social historian and in the end fell, inevitably, between two stools. I failed as a reporter and only half succeeded as a novelist.

In the beginning these popular editors were so high in mind, so genial and so persuasive that they won me to their plans before I realized my danger. Page, Bok, Doubleday, Phillips, Lorimer and McClure appeared so genuinely interested in me that it was hard not to write to their order, especially as I was poor and could only now and again finish a story which Alden or Gilder considered worthy of their approval. Therefore I found myself writing three-part romances for the *Ladies' Home Journal*, essays on Ibsen, Im-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pressionism and other controversial subjects for the *Forum*, biographical studies for *McClure's* and stories of the mountain West for Lorimer's *Post*. I claim no alibi. If I am less guilty than other writers, it is only because I had less ability. My journalistic efforts were too feeble, too half-hearted to be of much service. I wrote for *McClure's* but I continued to visit the *Century's* literary salon.

LVII

One of the journalists who interested me at this time was Irving Bacheller, who had established a syndicate somewhat on McClure's lines; and in one of my days of depression I went in to see him concerning a series of articles which he had suggested.

I found him in an office on the north side of a building in midtown. He was a large, blond young man of slow speech and slow motions, frank, kindly, but curiously absent-minded. I recall that as I entered he was sitting at his desk, gazing out of the window at a blank and ugly wall, evidently dreaming of something beside baseness for the glance which he turned upon me was that of a man concerned with visions.

I liked his face and voice, and as we talked I learned that our lives were singularly similar. He was born of a New England family in the North Country, and had come to New York as I had gone to Boston. He knew my people as I knew his. We had studied the same school books and remembered the same songs and poems. He had gone into journalism to earn a living whilst I had boiled my pot by teaching and lecturing. My stories of boy life on the prairie had interested him, and he had in mind an arrangement whereby he could be sure of a series of stories and sketches of the Wisconsin pioneers.

As he talked I marveled at his ability to sustain himself in the journalistic world—so much of the dreamer and poet he appeared. McClure belonged to the hustle of the New York newspaper world, but Irving Bacheller did not—although he had occupied an editorial chair in the office of the *World*. His mind was on the North Country and he was even then beginning a book which was to outsell all of its contemporaries and take him permanently out of journalistic life. He had begun to write *Eben Holden*, but I did not know it then, and I went away wondering if his syndicate could possibly make its way in opposition to that of McClure's.

His manuscripts, like his letters, were exquisitely written, in fine, formal script as regular as an ancient scroll; and I have preserved them all—even the most unimportant notes —for they were too beautiful to tear up.

Although Brander Matthews was born in New Orleans he was the essence of New York City. I never thought of him as having been anywhere in the West or South, and yet he had as a boy taken a long trip into the West. Perhaps it was this experience which made him so kindly disposed toward my own work. He often dropped in at the Players to sit for an hour with his cronies, jesting and telling stories. Like Stedman he was a talker, but a witty one. His jests were often barbed and I congratulated myself on his friendship, for he was an enemy to be avoided.

We had a common bond in Howells, whom we loved and admired. He never failed to defend him when someone attacked him, for he was a loyal friend. Unlike Howells, he kept in close touch with England and knew many of the leading English authors. Kipling was his friend and he spoke often of Edmund Gosse, Andrew Lang and others of the scholarly group. Mark Twain was his intimate friend and he had known Edwin Booth. With so many mutual interests I always welcomed an hour with him, although I could never find a moment in which to twinkle on my own account. He bewildered me by his swift allusions and his wide and definite knowledge of things on which I had only a vague report.

I frequently made one of a small circle about his fire on Sunday evenings. His li-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brary was almost equal to Stedman's, but his tastes ran more to critical literature, for he was a professor in the English department at Columbia University, and his callers were seldom poetasters. There was something keenly frosty in his attitude toward poets. They must bring him something very definitely good or he would have none of them —his generous aid went out to young playwrights and novelists, who derived great inspiration from his criticism and his immensely cosmopolitan viewpoint. His associates were Bronson Howard, Augustus Thomas, Augustin Daly, William Gillette and other dramatists and actors.

He was an authority on the drama—French, as well as English—and though I never heard him in the classroom I can imagine the humorous incisiveness of his comment and the interest which he aroused and held. Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero were chief among the English dramatists of the times, and Jones was often his guest while in New York. Matthews appeared to be almost as minutely informed of what was going on in London as he was of New York, and one night he spoke of Elizabeth Robins. She and a Miss Lee, another American girl, had made a great stir in England by establishing a theatre of their own and producing several of the plays of Ibsen.

Shortly after this, at a dinner given by Annie Nathan Meyer, I met Miss Robins and we had a great deal of talk together. Our great bond was the Klondike. Her brother had gone into the Yukon and she was greatly alarmed and anxious about him. She told me that she was a Kentuckian but had lived eight years in London. "I am to produce *Hedda Gabbler* at a matinée soon, and I want you to come".

This I promised to do, for she impressed me as a powerful personality, serious and strenuous. Although plain of feature she had burning, intense gray eyes. Thin of frame, large of hand, she was a woman of marked individuality and power.

LVIII

When I first began to study the local-color novelists of the South I had no expectation of ever meeting any of them personally, but one by one they crossed my path. These contacts came without effort for the most part, just in the way of trade, one might say.

Among the first of the writers whom I met in this way was Ruth McEnery Stuart, who came to Boston with her sister to visit friends who by happy chance were members of my circle and gladly introduced me to this Louisiana novelist whose stories I had read and greatly enjoyed.

Ruth McEnery Stuart was one of the "new school" of Southern novelists. She had reached the point of describing the Negro in a direct and understanding way (much as Harris Dickson did a few years later), but she had not touched on the darker phases of his character. She pictured him and his women as she saw them on her lawn and in her kitchen, amused by their primitive disregard of marriage customs and the laws of property, and by their notions of medicine and religion. Her negroes were themselves tolerant, humorous, jocose critics of one another. All this was new and valuable.

I often saw her at her home in New York or at teas and dinners, and always found her a delightful companion. She told stories with artistic plan and precision, with a chuckle in her voice and a comic light in her gray eyes. I often said in speaking of her, "She's a good fellow", meaning that she was like a genial refined man with a humorous outlook. She could jest about herself, which was rare among women then and is not common now, although I hear self-derisive feminine comment more often today than yesterday.

Joel Chandler Harris I saw but once. On one of my lecture tours I called upon him at the Atlanta *Constitution* office. He was not prepossessing in appearance and plainly showed that he was aware of it. He was short, red-haired and ungainly, but his face

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was interesting and his eyes attractive. He was sitting at his desk in his shirt sleeves, and his office, quite like that of a country editor, was cluttered, ugly and noisy.

He cleared a chair for me and for an hour we chatted in most neighborly fashion, discussing our many mutual friends and listing the makers of Southern literature. He talked easily and well but was inclined to let me take the lead which I did by asking questions.

He had few illusions about the South. He saw it somewhat as I did, a place of mental emptiness as well as of physical unkemptness, but believed that it was changing for the better although not so rapidly as he wished.

He told me that he was of mountain stock and that he had worked his way at every foot of his upward path. His life had been somewhat like my own and his stories of the mountain folk were akin to my *Main-Travelled Roads*, though much more humorous. I think I surprised him by dwelling in praise upon his stories of the mountaineers at Teague Poteet's, rather than upon his Uncle Remus tales. He knew the Negro's soul better than any of his contemporaries, but he also knew the men and women of the mountains. He painted the aristocratic planter from an entirely different angle than Thomas Nelson Page's. He was bluntly critical of "the old régime".

I asked him if he ever came to New York and he smiled as he answered, "No, I stay right here, summer and winter".

I suspect he knew that I was thinking of the time when he failed to appear at a dinner in New York at which he was listed as a guest of honor. He got as far as Baltimore and turned back, unable to face the bright lights and the speeches which awaited him. No doubt he dreaded the remark "Is *that* Joel Chandler Harris? Well I didn't know he was red-haired".

George W. Cable was an unimpressive, dapper little man, a dignified lecturer notwithstanding his slimness and his high-keyed, soft-toned voice. In some strange way he and Mark Twain were induced to appear together on the platform, two most divergent types. My first sight of them both was in the Boston Music Hall, where they gave a program of readings. Mark appeared to be over six feet tall by contrast with Cable, and for many years I thought of him as a tall thin man. Not until I met him in his own home some ten years later did I find him of about my own height.

John Fox, Jr., saw the mountaineers with clear gaze and reported them in *Hell-For-Sartin Creek* with something like the humorous precision and brevity which characterized Harris's "At Teague Poteet's".

Fox, although a Kentuckian, was often in New York. His joyous spirit, his liking for good clothes and gay company, his popularity as a diner-out, put him as far from Harris's way of life as a man could possibly be, and yet their short stories were closely akin. Fox did not imitate Harris, but he studied the same people and saw them in much the same light.

Fox and I met only occasionally, for his way led among the younger fashionables, but I always enjoyed a chat with him. He talked crisply, clearly, and always had a good story to tell. He often read his stories from the platform, and read them extremely well. He was most successful in suggesting the mountain dialect—almost as successful as Riley had been with his Hoosier characters—and was in high demand. He died comparatively young, but left a considerable list of stories which cannot be neglected in a general study of Southern literature.

LIX

During all these months, while meeting Roosevelt, Barrie and other interesting men and women, I was at work gathering the material for my *Life of Grant*. Part of the spring I spent in Washington and several weeks in St. Louis. I had visited Vicksburg, the Wilderness, Chattanooga and other of the great

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

commander's battle fields and the closer I got to the actual man, the simpler and gentler he became. The mythical Grant, the silent, grim, remorseless Grant, disappeared and a low-voiced, modest, kindly citizen took his place. Even those who spoke of his weakness for drink, which was most in evidence at the time of his deepest discouragement, declared that his native dignity was never lost.

As I talked with these men in their homes or offices I found it difficult to imagine them in the high command in which they once were seated. I think they had come to doubt it themselves. They would not express their feeling in words, but their eyes dimmed with emotion as they recounted these, their heroic hours. Some, like Longstreet, resembled aged captive eagles brooding over their wide flight above seas and cliffs. Others were boastful. That I was marching in the rear ranks of a disappearing army was evident. I began to understand the early blunders, defeats and blind marching of our democratic armies. Our soldiers were not warriors and their leaders, for the most part, knew nothing of military strategy. Those who had received a West Point training had never commanded a thousand men. At the opening of the war Grant himself, a humble ex-Captain, could find no opportunity to test his training.

For two years I lived among these dying giants, absorbing their concepts, trying to organize their confused memories, and even as I worked at their records they died. My work had begun not a moment too soon. In truth it had not begun soon enough, for many of the most valuable of Grant's associates had been mustered out before I began my study.

The book itself suffered defeat. It came out in the midst of the Spanish War, and was forced to contend with a crop of new slogans and new heroes. The war of Grant and Lee was thrust far into the background of public interest by the exploits of Dewey and Evans, Roosevelt and Wood. Colonel Fred Grant became General Grant, and the Civil War took on distance, doubly historic. Heroes of the Civil War were no longer of vital interest. My book received indifferent attention, and had but a small sale.

Nominally my home was still in Chicago, and I did, indeed, do a considerable part of my writing there, but I looked to the East for companionship as well as for my living. The literary and artistic group which the World's Fair had brought together had broken up. The hopes of those who predicted Chicago as a literary center second only to New York were frosted before they flowered. As the great buildings of the Fair were dismantled, and the foreign artists and eastern writers went away to Paris or New York, the city became almost as unesthetic as before.

As I returned to it after a month or two in the East, it all seemed crude and raw. The only spot of light was the tenth floor of the new Fine Arts Building, on which my friends Oliver Dennett Glover, Ralph Clarkson, Bessie Potter and Lorado Taft had grouped their studios. Clarkson's studio became a meeting place of the "Little Room", an informal literary and artistic club, and there I not only met my friends but many celebrities from the East and from England.

The name of this club was taken from a sketch by Madeleine Yale Wynne, in a volume published in 1894. It was the story of a mysterious little room in a New England farm-house, which appeared and disappeared during the childhood, girlhood and maturity of the writer, ostensibly herself. As our club had no home of its own, and used Bessie Potter's studio Friday afternoon, someone suggested naming the club "The Little Room".

Obscure as this organization seems, it was an attempt at organizing the literary forces of the city and most of the men and women who were notable for creative work in architecture, sculpture, painting and music were in some degree represented. From the standpoint of London or New York it was, I am afraid, a meagre showing.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With the failure of Stone and Kimball I was left without a publisher, but the magazines were hospitable to my stories, and Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, was appreciative and generous. In one of my trips to Cripple Creek, I came out by stage and in the seat behind me I overheard two mining men discussing mines and mining. One of them said, "We put a hundred dollars into experiments on reducing that ore. The gold was there, but how to get it out was our problem. I've never encountered a more refractory ore. One day I scraped some of the amalgam off the plates and poured it into a small vial and put this in my vest-pocket and carried it to Denver. When I looked at it there, I was amazed to find that it had turned green. I was stumped. However, I wouldn't be beat. I knew I could solve that ore and I asked the company for a little more time and a little more money. Ultimately I won out".

This conversation furnished me with a theme to my liking. I at once planned a story in which a young miner with two unskilled partners had chanced upon such an ore, and with a confident belief in his ability to solve the mystery, the engineer bought out his disheartened partners. The interesting moral question then arose in his mind, "Is it right for me to take advantage of the ignorance and discouragement of my fellow toilers, when I believe I could sometime solve the ore?" The question became actually disturbing when he had won the love of a fine woman.

I called this three-part novelette "Witches' Gold" but Bok, who liked the story, asked me to leave off the first part of it and call it "The Spirit of Sweetwater". This I did and it proved to be one of the most successful of all my novelettes and led Bok to ask for more.

Later this story was published by Doubleday, McClure and Company and was successful—as my successes went—and later still I restored the first part and published it under its original title, *Witches' Gold*. Howells thought well of it, but warned me that it was a bit overwrought and that danger lay in that direction.

LX

When I returned to Washington in January, 1898, I found Roosevelt there. He had resigned his position as Police Commissioner to become Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He at once gave me the freedom of his office. "Come in any time," he said, "and see the wheels go round."

Naturally I seized upon the opportunity. It amused and flattered me to be treated as a privileged guest. Roosevelt gave me a seat near his private desk and while we talked he continued his routine, receiving reports and signing papers, exactly as he had said he would. I saw the wheels go round. Whatever John D. Long thought of him, Roosevelt was Chief of the force.

Nevertheless I expressed my regret that he had given up his Commissionership. "That was a big job."

He smiled, with a peculiar twist of his lips and said, with humorous inflection, "*This* is a big job, if our navy is ever to count for anything", and as I heard him outline plans for increase of gun power and approve more frequent target practice, I perceived that he meant that it should amount to something.

One of his most intimate friends was Senator Lodge of Massachusetts, and I suspect that an invitation that I received to dine at Lodge's house came at Roosevelt's suggestion. Lodge had the calm grace of an intellectual aristocrat, but was a very able politician and parliamentarian, as some of his blustering colleagues discovered.

He was a writer as well as a scholar, and was said to own one of the finest private libraries in Washington. As I entered it that night, it gave me very high respect for its owner. It was a working library. It suggested the historian and essayist. It was spacious, with chairs and lights which invited one to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

read, a refuge from all the tumults of business and politics.

The guests that night were few: Brooks Adams, Theodore Roosevelt and myself. The talk at the table was good, but my most vivid memory is of the heckling to which I was subjected by Roosevelt after dinner.

After explaining that I had enjoyed an exceptional opportunity to study the West and South, Roosevelt began to question me for the benefit of Lodge and Adams whom he called "you Easterners" ranking himself with me as a Westerner. "I am of the short-grass country; Garland is of the prairie lands."

These men listened to me, I don't know why, while I told them what the West was complaining about. At Roosevelt's repeated urging to speak my mind freely, I said my say and he applauded me. I asked them how they could expect the farmers, two thousand miles from the seashore, to take an interest in shipping or the building up of the navy. "Theoretically they are all patriotic but their interests are not all yours."

Then Adams took the floor. He had a theory that the equatorial zone of the earth was the furnace into which for a million years the weaker races of the world had been crowded and consumed. In the north temperate zones men came to greatest power as warriors as well as food producers. Nothing worth while ever came out of the equatorial belt, he asserted, and just what its bearings were he did not say, but I recall that in all he said he was the unrelenting pessimist in tone as well as in words; the scholar, the man of secure position, the autocrat, but ridden by a remorseless theory.

Roosevelt appeared to enjoy this exquisitely phrased diatribe against God and civilization. No doubt he had heard something like it from Adams before, but if he had not, he was too soundly the optimist to be disturbed by it. He did not smile easily, but he turned a humorous look on me now and again as if to warn me not to take the savage philosopher too seriously.

One of the most notable men with whom I talked in Washington was John Hay, who lived in a noble mansion across the square from the White House. He was a small man, dapper in dress and cultivated in speech, a person of great dignity, admittedly a very able diplomat and statesman.

He received me most genially and related some pleasing stories of Grant, whom he had seen during the war and afterward. He was distinctly literary in his speech and interests, and made a very delightful host. At the end of half an hour's talk he said, "I must go up to the Army and Navy Club. Perhaps you'll walk with me".

I was glad of the opportunity and as we walked along he confided his great regret that he had never been able to follow out his ambition to be a writer. He spoke of his share in the Lincoln biography, and asked me if I had seen Nicolay, intimating that more people knew of his Pike County ballads than of his work as historian. We talked of Howells and I was glad to have him speak so warmly of his work. Altogether I made the acquaintance of the literary John Hay, rather than the statesman and diplomat.

I found Nicolay living in a modest house on Capitol Hill, surrounded by books, very plainly a working historian. He was a countryman in tone and manner, but scholarly in a non-literary way. He had little to tell me of Grant, however, and made upon me the impression of an man forgotten—one who had had a tremendous opportunity but had not been able to make the most of it.

LXI

In the autumn of 1871, when I was eleven years of age, my father brought back from the county town one day a copy of a little monthly magazine called *Hearth and Home*, which had in it the beginning of a story which marks an epoch in American fiction as it marked an epoch in my own literary life. This story was *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Up to this time I had believed, as children naturally do, that literature was concerned with something far off and romantic. The stories I was reading concerned themselves either with Indians and trappers in the far West, or with dukes and duchesses in ancestral castles. *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* was my first realization that stories could be written of people very like my father's friends and neighbors. I had the feeling that if I mounted my pony and rode away to the east I might conceivably pass the door of Old Man Mean's cabin, and the schoolhouse in which Ralph Hartsock was a teacher, or catch a glimpse of little Sharkie coming down the road to school. The fact that thereafter this magazine was on arrival a bone of contention between my sister and myself proved its power to interest.

In the years which followed I read every new book which came from the pen of Edward Eggleston, but I had no expectation of meeting him. Now here he was, only a few blocks away.

I found him a big hearty man, gray of hair, leonine of head and ruddy of complexion. His laugh was frank and his manner cordial. He gave me some valuable reminiscences concerning Grant.

He was a tremendous talker—but a talker who had something to say. So well stored was his mind that a word sufficed to set in motion the vast fund of his learning.

In my copy of *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, a copy of the first edition with all of its atrocious illustrations, he wrote the following lines:

> This story was published in *Hearth and Home* in October, November and December of 1871 and in book form, December 15. It sold about ten thousand copies the first six months and about ten thousand in each of the two following half-years. It was pirated and sold in England in an edition of ten thousand copies, and has since been reprinted there with no profit to the author. Madame Blanc rendered it into French for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. It was published in book covers in French, German and Danish and perhaps other tongues. This copy has all the original crudities, exuberances and violations of artistic canons that have helped to give the book a sale of more than a hundred thousand in the United States.
>
> These facts are set down here for my good friend, Mr. Hamlin Garland, with the sincere regards of
>
> EDWARD EGGLESTON.

A second visit to him at his home added to my liking for him. I enjoyed his hearty, mellow and gracious personality. We fell at once, quite naturally, into a discussion of his *Hoosier Schoolmaster*, the inception of which was of interest to me historically. He told me that it was written after he left the ministry and while he was editing *Hearth and Home* in Chicago. "It was written to fill the columns of the magazine," he admitted with humorous inflection. "I had no idea of its value to my readers. As it went on the interest in it grew. I was born in Vevay and grew to manhood there, but only part of my literary material relates to that period of my life. *The Mystery of Metropolisville* is based upon my life in southern Minnesota, where I went for my health. In those days Minnesota was supposed to be a place of healing airs and waters—a place to which doctors sent their hopeless cases. All my writing was done after I left the backwoods and most of it after I came to New York. I realized that I was not giving my material the best form but my intent was to do what the Dutch painters had done, paint the homely and grotesque men and women I knew, in the most artistic manner possible. I was breaking new ground. It was an attempt at the right thing."

The effect of his work on American fiction cannot be overestimated. And yet there was a time when Indiana did not honor him. I am not sure that his pictures of backwoods life are not held by many people to be caricatures even today, and yet at a dinner to Booth Tarkington at the Lotus Club some years ago when I said, in making my speech,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Edward Eggleston is the father of us all", Tarkington, looking up at me, said heartily, "You are entirely right".

My *Life of Grant* was now so nearly finished that I felt free to begin a work I had long meditated. I began to dictate to my stenographer a rough outline of the life I had led as a boy in Wisconsin and Iowa. Each morning was spent at this task. In my walks about the suburbs or in the parks, I was constantly reminded of scenes of long ago. The keen, harsh wind, sheep feeding on sunny slopes, the frogs beginning to croak, all brought spiritual refreshment, clearing my brain of library dust and drowning out the rumors of war. The manuscript I produced was rough and shapeless, but it contained many of the essentials of our pioneer life.

LXII

One evening at one of the "literary evenings" which Major Powell arranged at his home, I met Dr. Edward Everett Hale, whom I had not seen for ten years. He was sadly aged but greeted me in a bluff yet cordial tone. He was staying in Washington as Chaplain of the Senate. He still wore a wide Western hat and was a most noticeable figure as he walked about the city.

He counted himself a man of letters, although essentially the teacher and preacher, and enjoyed the society of those who wrote. He and Major Powell made a most picturesque pair. The major, a short, one-armed, bewhiskered man, looked up into Hale's face with a quizzical squinting glance, as though puzzled by his towering visitor's greeting. Abrupt, almost explosive of speech, yet gentle, the major was a great figure in Washington. He had been an engineer under Grant at Vicksburg. He had been the first to explore the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, and he was head of the Ethnological Bureau of the Smithsonian Institution.

A day or two later I met one of Powell's assistants, an Omaha Indian called Peter La Flesch, sauntering along one of the Capitol walks with a pretty girl, and we had a few minutes talk together. He told me that Alice Fletcher (who was making a book of Omaha songs) wanted to see me and gave me her address. There was not a trace of Omaha in his speech, on the contrary his diction was notable for its succinctness, definiteness and clarity, and as he walked away I thought, "There is the subject for a novel. Think of that man's derivation and his psychological inheritances. What a chance for some man or woman to discover his real character, to unlock his psychologic closets, to discover his loves and hates".

The following evening I met him again, in the home of his patron saint, Alice Fletcher. Miss Fletcher sang some of the plaintive songs she had collected whilst Peter accompanied her on the flute. The effect was melodious, but gave, in some cases, only a weak dilution of the actual songs as I had heard them sung. As MacDowell had said, in transposing them to the conventional scale for the piano Miss Fletcher had stripped them of their fire and speed and savage rhythm. Nevertheless she had done a useful work in collecting them.

James Lane Allen had a home in Washington in 1898, and in my diary I find a record of meeting him. 'He is big and blond, six feet and more in height, muscular and deep chested. He looks like a serious-minded young physician. His voice is soft and his words well chosen. Under his softness, however lies a very rigid and well-developed theory of fictional art. He can become argumentative and dogmatic on occasion. . . . He and John Fox are the leading representatives of Kentucky authorship, although Fox is Northern in his relationship."

The longer I stayed in Washington the more I marveled over its failure as a literary center. It seemed an ideal place in which to write. Its clear air, its leisurely movement, its beauty of buildings and streets, its quiet, made it an almost ideal city for authors. Yet

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only a few could be found, and they, like myself, were transient guests. The lure of New York was all embracing.

Among the writers resident in Washington at this time none was more exotic than Charles Warren Stoddard, a Californian and author of *South Sea Idyls*. An invalid, he complained of the cold and damp of the city and of his overheated apartment. He was a fine-featured gray-haired man of sixty, with something notably distinguished in manner and speech. Tender and wistful at times, he was withal a man of power and imagination. Dreaming of his beloved Islands he had not been able to make a home in Washington. As professor of literature at a Catholic university he lectured only three times a week, and yet he bitterly declared it to be a grind. "I do it only because I must pay my board," he admitted.

All about his study were rows of autographed books, shells from the South Seas, braided mats, embroidered cloths and images. Mingled with these primitive objects were carven figures of Christ, sadly painted Madonnas, and other Catholic emblems. How much these symbols meant to him I could not discover, but they did not lighten his sorrows. He suggested a lion suffering through no fault of his own, patient, yet breaking forth occasionally in growls of pain.

LXIII

For several years I had been going to the Rockies but they were no longer wild enough to suit me; I wished to explore the primitive. Believing this to be the last opportunity to share in a Westward march in any degree comparable to that which my ancestors had made across the Alleghany Mountains, I set forth into the North.

Babcock met me at Ashcroft and we at once outfitted a train of pack ponies and two saddle horses and started for Quenelle on the Fraser. At Fraser with an additional pack animal we entered upon the almost forgotten Telegraph Trail and for seventy-eight days struggled through the mud and rocks of endless forests. High in the mountains we got beyond any trail. Travelling alone we found our way across the tundra of the Alpine Meadows by "the lay of the land".

It was not a dangerous journey but it was not a pleasant one. It rained almost every day in the Skeena valley. We camped in the rain, cooked in the rain, saddled in the rain and rode in the rain, while the wet willows sloshed millions of tons of water upon us.

After some eighty days of this wearing progress, with other bands of gold seekers, we came down to the Third Fork of the Stikine River, ragged, hungry and discouraged, too late in the season to cross the divide between the Stikine and the Hootalinqua, as we had planned to do. After resting for several weeks at Glenora, I decided that to attempt to raft down the Yukon would be to "freeze in" somewhere on the shores, and as the news from my mother was not reassuring, I turned the outfit over to my partner, reserving only my horse, Ladrone, a perfect saddler, Arabian in his markings and intelligence. Purchasing a place for him as well as for myself, I embarked on the last Hudson Bay trading boat, and started for the coast with intent to catch a steamer for Seattle. While waiting at Wrangell the news of a new gold rush from Skagway into the Atlin Lake country reached me and to take a hand in it seemed necessary to complete my education. Leaving my horse in pasture, I sailed for Skagway on a small boat densely crowded with other excited prospectors.

Outfitting again in Skagway, I crossed the infamous White Pass, a grave and grievous way, and took passage on a scow from Lake Bennett to Tagish Water, where we portaged over to Atlin Lake. From that point I prospected the neighboring streams and finally located a placer claim. Late in September I packed my kit, turned my mine over to another man, an Englishman, and left for the coast and home.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From Lake Bennett I walked thirty-five miles in less than ten hours over a high pass through fog and rain and down to Dyea harbor. This was one of the most laborious days I ever endured. During the last two hours I waded an icy stream in the dark, my legs so numb with cold and weariness that I could not feel the ground beneath my feet. At ten o'clock I reached a hotel, a fire and some hot soup!

At Seattle I locked Ladrone in a car with a supply of hay and water, and set out over the range on the Northern Pacific Railway, reaching the family homestead at West Salem, Wisconsin, on the twenty-first of September.

Three days after my return, while helping my father build a fence to form a pasture for my horse, I was approached by a neighbor, who handed me a package from the post-office. It was a copy of my *Life of Grant*, the first one I had seen. I opened it, and glanced through it, while my father waited impatiently for me. Then putting it on the top of a post I returned to my spade!

In the same mail came a letter from John Phillips saying "I have read your bundle of Klondike poems and I like them so well that I intend to print several pages of them in the November number".

This gave me more pleasure than the publication of any prose would have done, for these lines had been written on the trail, in the saddle, or at the camp fire. Whatever else they lacked, they were direct reactions from the environment they claimed to depict.

(*To be continued*)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FICTION

STEPHEN ESCOTT *by Ludwig Lewisohn* (HARPERS. $2.50)

MR. LEWISOHN'S *Stephen Escott* is an artistic and dramatic externalization of problems of sex and marriage in relation to modern economic life, the modern individualistic woman, winds of radical doctrine, and inherited inhibitions. A divorce lawyer, Stephen Escott, sketches six sorts of love, typical of various strata of American life and thought. Three marriages suggest the evil of various levels of inhibition and repression, as embodied in Stephen's father, Stephen, and Clayton. Stephen's experience with Beatrice suggests the futility of mere animalism, and Paul Glover's murder of his "emancipated" wife's lover is supposed to indicate the hollowness and peril of Greenwich Village radicalism. Through the murky gloom of these five stories, as a sort of beacon of peace, shines the love of David and Ruth, true to the ancient Hebrew tradition. As a novel the book is not without a certain lurid power dependent upon its frankness, imagery and swiftness. Most interesting is Paul Glover's introspective analysis of the fine nuances of emotion which led to the murder. But the novelistic structure, effective as it is, is primarily a means of presenting ideas; and it is with these that we are mainly concerned.

Fundamentally, I venture to think that Stephen's philosophy of sex is a unique confusion of modern sophistry, reminiscent of Freud, and of sound wisdom reminiscent of the Hebrew tradition. One wonders occasionally whether, in revolting from a repressive Puritan one-sidedness Stephen is not in danger of embracing another sort of one-sidedness no less extreme. Stephen sees sex "as central, as pervasive"; the "animal" side of his love was "imperious"; and since the six stories have "unity" only "from the fact that they all center about the play of the reproductive instinct", one suspects at times that Stephen is somewhat oblivious, in his plea for complete living, of the multitude of distinctly human satisfactions—somewhat oblivious, in his obsession with sex, of the ideal of human variety and proportionateness. Even Byron, who was not a New England Puritan, concluded that "man's love is of man's life a thing apart". Stephen, who "has a Jewish heart", summarizes his experience with Dorothy as representative of what happens "daily in a thousand breasts"; while he admits "a division and a schism" in the human soul, he believes that "to interpret that division as one between a higher and a lower, a nobler and a baser, nature . . . is . . . an endless and horrible futility". He adopts the romantic notion of naturally good instincts thwarted by civilization. "Our civilization was built upon wrong principles and upon a mistaken view of our inevitable nature, and . . . critical observation of both the self and the world will shift the center of conflict from the soul to the rules by which we are supposed to live, and instead of pronouncing the former sinful, stigmatize the latter as unjust and wrong."

Certainly this endeavor of a character with "a Jewish heart", reverencing the great Hebrew tradition, to "shift the center of conflict", to deny "a higher and a lower" self, contrasts oddly enough with the wisdom of another Jew who saw life as an inner conflict between the "law of the members" and the "law of the spirit". It is precisely here, it seems to me, that the confusion of thought

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is most apparent. Nevertheless, mixed with modern sophistry, the book contains much sound wisdom. One can agree that the modernistic Beatrice's "arguments left out the real human being, the eternal male who wants woman and home, peace and child". David knows that happiness "has to be lived for, worked for, suffered for. *Ach*, these modern women! They have no humility". In her younger days, his wife Ruth had accepted her obligations: she cooked, washed, and bore his son, keeping her intellectual interests. "A modern girl", she solved "the modern woman's problem" "by functioning exactly as women have always functioned, by letting her instincts become neither atrophied nor perverted but by using them under strict intellectual control". When Stephen expects to find David in despair, he finds him celebrating "the Sabbath after the ancient manner of his people", his "whole house an atmosphere of peace". "David Sampson and his family were sustained in the meaningless welter of our modern life by a tradition, a sense of continuity and the conviction of belonging to a community that stretched across the ages and annihilated space." Thus, in spite of the undercurrent of sympathy for a false naturalism, the core of the book is sound in its conviction that abiding peace is the result of control in the interest of deeper human needs, of control directed and sustained by the knowledge that one is true not to an untested theory but to the findings of innumerable generations who have won peace.

HARRY HAYDEN CLARK

THE 42ND PARALLEL *by John Dos Passos* (HARPERS. $2.50)

LIKE *Manhattan Transfer*, this book is experimental in form. It contains four series of compositions, arranged like a scrapbook with no apparent order. These are: (1) short biographies of noted Americans, told in a form bordering on free verse, with considerable seasoning of Menckenesque irony; (2) "news-reel"; (3) "the camera eye"; and (4) five tales, told in excerpts, about two hobos, a publicity man, and two working girls.

The nineteen sections of the "news-reel" are arranged chronologically within the years 1900-1917. They are pastiches of scraps of headlines and news-stories and popular songs, and must represent considerable grubbing in old files. In expressionistic style they give vivid ironical pictures of the times they represent.

In "the camera eye" Mr. Dos Passos once again indulges in Joycean expressionism. These twenty-seven short passages present scoops from the stream of consciousness of some youth—perhaps the author?—from infancy to manhood. Here the author carefully shuns hyphens and coherency.

But these are mere interludes in Mr. Dos Passos's vaudeville program. The reader finds real interest, if anywhere, in the five tales. These are told in that carefully naïve condensed, colloquial style that Ernest Hemingway, among the followers of Stein and Joyce, has most successfully affected. They are, in pleasant contrast to the interludes, perfectly coherent, and contain abundance of vivid and convincing observations of life, particularly on its seamy side. The five characters' peregrinations take them all over the North American continent, and display, on the part of the author, an extraordinary knowledge of local color, particularly that tint seen in bawdy houses and saloons.

Despite the vividness of detail, however, the total effect is disappointment. In *Manhattan Transfer* one felt a unified theme: an attempt to portray the disordered complexity of the life of a great city. The author's scrapbook technique was, in view of this theme, justified. Here there is no such justification. From the title and the opening quotation on meteorology one is led to hunt a geographical motif, and one is unsuccessful. Such a motif would seem *a priori* rather futile; and as a matter of fact the characters range from Winnipeg to Mexico City. At

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the end we willingly suspect the author of a not very funny joke at our expense.

Apart from the title, the characters, though some of them meet, lead unrelated and insignificant lives, and not one of their stories has, in an artistic sense, an ending. Perhaps the author has given himself to that naturalistic creed which denies the existence of ends in life, and hence refuses to make endings in fiction. It remains a fact about human nature, however, that readers most enjoy stories which, in Aristotle's phrase, have a beginning, a middle—and an end. Finally, the very absence of any coherent scheme and of any explicit underlying idea, coupled with the author's bitter naturalism, yields an impression of futility. One must conclude that here again we have a sample of the naturalistic pessimism and spiritual anarchy which mark our age.

THE TROUGH OF THE WAVE *by Olav Duun* (KNOPF. $2.50)

A FINAL criticism of this first part of Olav Duun's saga is impossible without a knowledge of the five parts yet to be published. As it stands Volume I consists of a few family chronicles having little artistic unity. In the complete work these episodes might fall into place as part of a larger plan. But the novel has distinct qualities which may be tentatively assessed.

The Trough of the Wave chronicles the lives of a hardy clan of farmers living about a hundred years ago on a fjord on the Norway coast. The first part of the book describes old Per Anders, the rugged patriarch, visiting his married daughters in the dead of winter, catching pneumonia from a solitary row across the fjord, and slowly dying. There follows an account of his two sons, Per and Jens, the one hard-working, law-abiding, and weak; the other wayward and forceful. The interest here centers in Jens, with his love affairs and final running off to sea as an escape from an undesired wife. The last third of the book tells how Per builds up a run-down farm, overstrains himself and, while yet a young man, dies. The novel ends with his son Anders assuming with manly strength the responsibilities of the estate and the carrying on of the Juvik traditions.

Duun's style is unusual: it is colloquial, consciously naïve, exclamatory, almost playful. He is at once subjective in presenting snatches from the thoughts of his people, and objective in characterizing them mostly on the surface, without partiality, and without expressed analysis. Bits of description of the weather and the country, with archaic and vivid personification, set the story solidly in the background of a harsh but vigorous nature. The translator, Mr. Arthur B. Chater, mentions difficulties in properly rendering the Norwegian; certainly one is often conscious that he is reading a translation.

The people are types familiar to readers of Hamsun: primitive folk, admirable in their sturdy strength and perseverance but ignorant and superstitious. So frequently is the last quality touched upon that one is led to suspect an underlying theme. The men of the Juviks are distinguished from all their neighbors and from their womenfolk by their manly scorn of ghosts and spells; but even the men finally succumb to superstitious terrors. The volume has anthropological interest in vividly presenting a folk in whom barbarism, with both its virtues and its vices, survives into modern times.

The total effect differs from what one would expect from the material. We are only too familiar with naturalistic studies of primitive creatures bound to the soil, rising above it only to sink inevitably back into it at the end. Such books are often impressive but always depressing. Duun, however, seems to be more interested in the heroic qualities of his folk, the human aspiration and will which distinguish them from mere oxen and make the Juviks a race of local aristocrats. As his modelling on the sagas would lead one to hope, he gains a charm of pastoral

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

simplicity and a power of traditional heroism which most modern fiction, under the disillusionments of science, has lost. The novel is too quiet and brief to gain the strongest emotional effects, but it is pleasantly and surprisingly inspiriting.

ALAN REYNOLDS THOMPSON

COONARDOO *by Katharine Susannah Prichard* (NORTON. $2.50)

COONARDOO is an Australian aborigine, one of a large tribe of gentle semi-human creatures living on a vast cattle ranch. She is a child when we first meet her squatting in the tropic dusk, singing sadly because Hugh, her white playmate, is starting for England and education. She is (in years at least) a young girl when he returns bringing with him the white woman he intends to marry and finds her the second wife of his head black man. She is in full maturity during those years she so faithfully serves Hugh and his dissatisfied and unsatisfying wife (not the girl he brought back with him but another just as bad). She is a widow and almost an old woman when Hugh turns on her and with insane rage tells her to be gone. In spirit at least she is a very old woman and utterly done with life when she crawls back to die in the place where her life had been lived. There is nobody left unless it is the soul of Hugh's dead mother screaming about the house in the body of a white cockatoo. This in brief is the story with the story left out, for the kernel is the almost unemotional passion of the white man and the native woman, a warm flow of feeling that is as unphysical as it is unintellectual.

Australia at last seems to have become articulate, when in so short a space of time it can produce such books as Henry Handel Richardson's *Ultima Thule*, Miss Prichard's own *Working Bullocks* and this fine story of white codes and primitive codes mixed and never fusing.

ESTHER FORBES

BROTHERS AND SISTERS *by I. Compton-Burnett* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.50)

A PRIZE should be awarded to *Brothers and Sisters* as the most baffling book of the year. Each page drives one into a frenzy of irritation; yet each page tyrannically compels one to its successor. Here is a book whose plot is quite impossible to follow; which is a crazy-quilt of incest, hidden wills and pseudo-Attic melodrama; whose personages include so many sets of brothers and sisters that one's faculty for recognition finally breaks down; and all of whose characters talk in exactly the same manner, using an artificial and pedantic language which has not the slightest relation to real conversation. One gathers that the background is English; but the reader would be hard put to it if he were asked to state the time of the action. The whole effect is that of a stiff, mechanical dream; yet the book has the power which even the maddest dreams possess of enlisting one's credulity.

The fact that it is wildly original seems to have blinded English reviewers to the fact that it is also wildly absurd, that no sensible person could, on reflection, stomach the tissue of incestuous relationships which are the fabric of the story. The point is, perhaps, that the sensible person, after a chapter or two, makes up his mind to read *Brothers and Sisters* without reflecting. He accepts its grave lunacy as a convention, a quirk of the author's mind which must be disregarded if one is to enjoy Miss Compton-Burnett's essential talents, which are undeniably real.

These talents seem to me two in number. The first reveals itself in the characterization of Sophia Stace, the harpy-matriarch who holds all the brothers and sisters (and miscellaneous unidentifiable relations) together in the net of her curious selfishness. In a very real sense she is not a recognizable character but an artificial creation, a Frankenstein-monster. She is quite horrible and quite unforgettable; in fact so much of the author's energy has been expended upon her that the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other people tend to pale in contrast. At any rate, I cannot tell them apart.

The author's other gift is one that has been remarked by everyone who has read this book. It is a talent for a certain kind of unbelievable yet fascinating dialogue whose nearest analogue in English literature is the completely conventionalized repartee of Wycherley's plays. But the comparison is very clumsy and inaccurate; the family conversations which make up the larger part of this book are *sui generis*. One can say that all the sentences sound like epigrams and yet are not quite epigrams; that the characters seem to be talking to themselves; that all of them are wits of the first water; that none of them speaks except to analyze character, either his own or someone else's; and that these analyses are usually cutting and frequently profound. Yet, when one has said these things, one realizes that the essence of the talk of *Brothers and Sisters* remains uncaught. Each reader must seize it for himself. And it is an effort worth making.

CLIFTON P. FADIMAN

PRAIRIE WOMEN *by Ivan Beede* (HARPERS. $2.50)

MR. BEEDE has taken enough leaves out of Chekhov's notebook to make one of his own. And it is a notebook well worth looking at. To mention Chekhov in this connection is not to imply that either Mr. Beede's manner or his matter is borrowed from the Russian: both are obviously and genuinely his own, but the method is a happy echo of the great short story writer's, and makes us wish again that Chekhov had written a novel. If he had, it might have been something like Mr. Beede's.

The book starts off unemphatically and usually enough, with a bridal couple riding to Chicago in the day coach to see the World's Fair. The last episode shows the bride, now an old woman, a grandmother, setting out in uncomfortable glory in a Pullman to California, leaving all her family, all her life, behind her, and not really sorry. Between the beginning and the end are eleven other episodes, all short, which give us the complete story of three families. In a book of less than average length, Mr. Beede has put, with very skilful condensing, enough material for two and a half novels.

The episodes, static in themselves, fit together into a dynamic whole. What Mr. Beede has done is to leave out a great deal of the unnecessary padding with which the average novel is puffed out: transitional, expository, atmospheric stuff that is usually considered the indispensable mortar to bind the bricks together. Mr. Beede has shown that if the blocks fit, no mortar is needed—that if the whole structure is cunningly contrived, no one will notice the joints.

WISHBONE *by Stirling Bowen* (DUTTON. $2.50)

MR. BOWEN'S quiet manner in these three stories is at first deceptively naïve: then as the story rounds into shape we recognize a gathering intensity—but it never quite comes to a head. The stories are like thunderstorms that threaten, and then drift away.

"An Imperfect Crime" tells of the love of a meditative cobbler for the town's bad girl: a love that follows her to the penitentiary and to her death, but will not let him go to her funeral. It is a story of considerable if disappointing poignance. "Townsman", the tale of a small-town boy who stayed that way, might easily have been expanded into a novel; we are grateful to Mr. Bowen for keeping it within proper limits. "Some Go Away" is the most successful story in the book: a blind young writer, egocentric and touchy, is married to a healthy and intelligent girl. Nothing happens, except that they get terribly on each other's nerves; the sense of impending tragedy is here unmistakable. On the negative side, Mr. Bowen's lack of comment, on the positive side, his choice of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

incident, his economy, are to be admired; his stories stand by themselves; if it were not for this curious diffusion of intensity, they might also move.

THE COMPANY *by Edwin Seaver* (MACMILLAN. $2.00)

MR. SEAVER has written a book about white-collar wage-slaves without once losing his temper. Not that this is the only way such a subject ought to be treated; some very effective diatribes against offices have been written—but Mr. Seaver's way is certainly effective.

The book consists of a series of incidents, more or less connected, featuring more or less the same characters. The point, which he never labors but which is constantly pricking the reader's attention, is that this company is more or less any company; that this is how most of us spend most of our waking hours. The office, in its superficial but horribly all-embracing routine, is the real life of these people. Though they wisecrack about it whenever they can, they take it seriously—so seriously that it never occurs to them how their lungs are impregnated with its scientifically ventilated, steam-heated, dead air. They rise in the morning, crowd into the subways, clog the elevators, fill the office buildings, attend conferences, kid each other, wait for five o'clock, go home again.

It is the strength of Mr. Seaver's method in this book that it shows us people we have to admit meeting every day of our lives; it is the weakness of his method that we can see nothing but their outlines. Perhaps Mr. Seaver thinks there is nothing more to know about them. Perhaps, but I doubt it.

T. S. MATTHEWS

LISBETH OF JARNFJELD *by Johan Falkberget* (NORTON. $2.50)

THIS novel, the first of Johan Falkberget's works to be translated, is the sort of book one thinks of as typically Scandinavian. It is a novel of the soil, a rugged tale in which both life and language are reduced to their simplest terms. It is built about the dominant figure of Lisbeth of Jarnfjeld, a cold, strong, courageous woman living where her ancestors had lived for centuries, on a bleak and remote mountain farmstead, fiercely proud of her blood and scornful of the softer folk in the valleys.

To save the place for her children, Lisbeth married a weak and avaricious man from the lowlands—always homeless and unhappy in the mountain country. But the son she bore to carry on the Jarnfjeld line was fathered by a mountain man. About Lisbeth's sin and her long, tragic expiation the story unfolds. Strong and dramatic in its conception, this novel nevertheless fails of the epic grasp which its author apparently designed. Lisbeth's portrait is statuesque but blurred, and never quite attains to complete credibility.

THE EXCURSION TO TILSIT *by Hermann Sudermann* (LIVERIGHT. $2.50)

HERMANN SUDERMANN, one of the finest of modern German novelists, and a writer who ranks high as a social historian of his country, left us at his death a group of novels and plays which are international and, to use justly a somewhat abused term, universal in their appeal. Like Selma Lagerlöf, and many other novelists whose material is national and even provincial, Sudermann by his very unconcern with cosmopolitan values gives a deeper truth and meaning to the lives of his characters. Of these four stories of Lithuanian peasants, only one, "Miks Bumbullis", depends for its effect upon purely national traits and circumstances. They are, for the most part, founded solidly upon the fundamental and inescapable human facts of birth and love and death. They are moving and tragic and, above all, intensely and vividly alive.

The title story, "The Excursion to Tilsit", is based upon a single, strongly dramatic episode. A man, infatuated with love of his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mistress, plots the death of his wife. To divert suspicion, he plans his crime as the conclusion of a pleasure trip, taken ostensibly to celebrate their reconciliation. The reconciliation actually takes place. Ansas loses his own life, but saves that of his wife by the very means he had planned for her destruction. Only a deep and sympathetic knowledge of character and a superb technical skill could have painted convincingly the enormous emotional transition which takes place in the brief space of the story, and could have brought it successfully to its moving climax.

Herr Sudermann has displayed his versatility by handling with equal ability the long, idyllic chronicle of "Jons and Erdma", the story of two bound servants who obtain their freedom and begin life together upon the edge of a swamp, where land is cheap, and where, at the cost of infinite labor, they may make a home of their own. When the years have crowned their long endeavor at last with success, Jons and Erdma are betrayed into ruin once more by the very love and ambition which had animated their upward struggle. Much of the success of these stories in English must be credited to Lewis Galantière, who has given them a sympathetic and spirited translation.

MARGARET WALLACE

THE LACQUER LADY *by F. Tennyson Jesse* (MACMILLAN. $2.50)

MISS JESSE writes a historical romance around the British conquest of Upper Burma in 1885 that may or may not be "historical". But that is scarcely important, for Miss Jesse has set out to entertain, and she has succeeded to a certain extent. Fortunately, her idea of "romance" is not that of a hundred writers who, given an exotic setting to excite their imaginations, attempt to pump their situations full of an overblown emotionalism. If one discounts the facile exploitation of the local color of Mandalay in this novel, one discovers a realistic study of a girl whose parentage mingles Italian, English and Burmese strains. The girl, Fanny, is by no means brilliant, but she has a certain cleverness in trading upon her sex to get her own way. This, however, is only useful during her short period of bloom, for her Italian and Burmese blood foredoom her to the early loss of her charm and her spirit fails with her beauty. It is her jealousy over a lost lover that causes her to divulge the machinations of the French at the court of Thebaw to the English, and that leads—so Miss Jesse tells us—to the British overthrow of the Kingdom of Ana in Upper Burma. Along with the story of Fanny go descriptions of massacres, an outline study of missionary work in the field, and talk of Britain's manifest destiny in Zululand, Afghanistan, India and elsewhere.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

JOHN MERRILL'S PLEASANT LIFE *by Alice Beal Parsons* (DUTTON. $2.50)

A SENSITIVENESS to the beauties of nature and the intricacies of the human mind, combined with a style that is rapidly maturing, make Mrs. Parsons's second novel a book to be read with real pleasure. Her first, *The Insider*, showed a promise that this has largely fulfilled. Concentration of interest and singleness of purpose have been added to an already rich perception, to which is made the further addition of a story engrossing both in thought and emotion. The pleasant and not unprofitable life of a man is thrown upon the screen and is judged, not by the author, but by the reader, for what it is worth.

To John Merrill comes the offer of unlimited possibilities as the manager of a plant already successful. Thomas Castle, father of ten illegitimate children, each by a different mother, has built up the town and the Works through his physical effort, economic wisdom and a vision of an ideal. Merrill, a penniless engineer, is chosen to carry on the work. At the close of the story he is rich, comfortable, in every way well situated and in full control

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of himself and the Works. For him life has been sufficient. Yet no one can read the book without feeling that spiritually he has died. Castle's daring and vision are absent from the younger man's character, and by just that deficiency within himself which protects him from Castle's physical adventuring.

Mrs. Parsons has balanced her issue and told her story well. More than a story remains. There remains a question of values which the reader must answer for himself. It is to the author's credit as an artist that her reader will not be satisfied until he has answered it.

THE KRAMER GIRLS *by Ruth Suckow* (KNOPF. $2.50)

FOR depicting sheer homeliness and the comfortable ways of homely folks, there are few better than Ruth Suckow. Her characters, from the first move they make, the first word they speak, become people one has known always. Their expressed emotions and those not expressed are alike known to the reader, and their yearnings and sorrows strike sympathy in those who comprehend the deep compassion underlying their creator's conception of them. This ability has made Miss Suckow what she is—one of the foremost novelists in America. But occasionally it is not enough; there is a need for more determinate narrative. Occasionally one wishes that into the everyday lives of her people Miss Suckow would put a little more of that contriving, that struggle to one end, that *fiction*, if necessary, that makes novels stories as well as character sketches.

In *The Kramer Girls* the lives of three sisters are set forth: Miss Georgie, the eldest, who should have gone into business; Miss Annie, the second, who is satisfied no matter what she does, and Rose, the baby, whose life is devoted to being what Georgie wants her to be. There is, among the sisters, a feeling of affection and tenderness that makes their relations at all times beautiful. Annie is negligible, though very real; it is Georgie and Rose with whom the author is most concerned, particularly Georgie, though the center of the stage is held by Rose. Georgie is, at her death, the most beloved person in the town, but her life has been one of frustration, her energies and capabilities were always too big for her sphere. In trying to give Rose every opportunity she has lacked, she never realizes that Rose is not of her own mold; so Rose, too, is frustrated by the compulsion of Georgie's ambition for her.

Miss Suckow is the champion of women who have not yet found their place in a society that offers the conflicting inducements of independence and domesticity. Here that conflict reaches even less of a conclusion than in *Cora*. She has her undeniable warm glow of sympathy, but if she does not take care, her books will soon become all warm glow and no fire at all.

MYRA M. WATERMAN

THIS IS MY BODY *by Margery Latimer* (CAPE & SMITH. $2.50)

THIS is a book about a girl who is continually being misunderstood. At college she is misunderstood by her classmates; at home she is misunderstood by her parents; men misunderstand her; when she writes, she is misunderstod by publishers; and if she had ever got published she would undoubtedly have been misunderstood by the readers. I am afraid that this last is what has happened to Miss Latimer as far as I am concerned: I can feel no sympathy for her heroine. In fact I feel that anyone so insanely self-centered and demanding deserves everything she got and more. The theme of the book, namely the reactions of a sensitive young person to reality, is one that requires taste and judgment to be properly handled. In this case the treatment is so definitely neurotic as to divert the reader's attention from such literary qualities as her writing may possess.

GEOFFREY T. HELLMAN

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ROAD OF THE GODS *by Isabel Paterson* (LIVERIGHT. $2.50)

THOSE who have followed Mrs. Isabel Paterson's literary commentaries in the New York *Herald-Tribune* would have been astonished had she written the ordinary type of historical novel. Her attitude of mind is so utterly of today that it is difficult to picture her as delving into the past. Yet her evocation of the atmosphere of the northern forests of the time of Octavius, her feeling for and knowledge of the religion of the Barbarians, and also (as shown in the two figures of Artemidorus and Metellus) her understanding of the Greek and Roman, prove her an author who, had she wished to, might have turned to strictly historical writing and produced work of an exceedingly powerful and vivid quality. In its externals, its choice of background, its action, *The Road of the Gods* is then an historical novel, and yet after we have read but a few pages we realize that it is something much more than that; indeed that in its informing spirit it is totally of today. In every chapter we meet Mrs. Paterson's subtly ironic disillusion, a disillusion which is vocal only in the character of the Greek Artemidorus and more delicately so in the heroine Greda.

One thing at least Mrs. Paterson has which is utterly lacking in most contemporary writing—a sense of form. Also she can write graceful and musical prose. Perhaps she would destroy, but she follows Hedda Gabler's injunction to destroy beautifully. If she is a believer in the futility of faith in religion she has at least faith in the necessity of form and the necessity of style.

PENDING HEAVEN *by William Gerhardi* (HARPERS. $2.50)

MR. WILLIAM GERHARDI is very clever, so clever indeed that he is becoming a bore. His latest novel is all cleverness, and precious little else. It tells the story of a writer beloved by three women with whom he lives a pasha-like existence, and who comes to his downfall through his love for a fourth. If *Pending Heaven* is a satire of the literary life and loves it simply doesn't come off, and if it is a farce it isn't funny. For the former it lacks incisiveness, and for the latter that simple directness of meaning which is the essence of successful farce. Mr. Gerhardi has evidently read Aldous Huxley, but it is only Huxley's trimmings which he has utilized. And all this is a pity, for in *Futility* and *The Polyglots* Gerhardi promised things which some day would count, but instead of allowing his talent to flower naturally he is at present apparently trying to force it in the hothouse of the exotic. In *Pending Heaven* his straining to be original is often painful, and it is this sense of strain which wearies the reader before he has read fifty pages. There are unexpected words and clever phrases, but nearly three hundred pages of these makes one almost wish for a world of idiots.

GRENVILLE VERNON

THE FIERY DIVE *by Martin Armstrong* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.50)

MOST of the stories in this book have the almost fatal disadvantage of being faintly reminiscent. Put down the "Portrait of the Misses Harlow", for example, and think how much better Katherine Mansfield did that sort of thing. And what a pity Conrad did not write "Sombrero"; he knew so well how to convey that peculiar admixture of human and geographical primitive brutality. All of which is undoubtedly unfair to Martin Armstrong, against whom no charge could be brought either of plagiarism or of "playing the sedulous ape".

Three of these tales are historical fiction, relying, however, on their intrinsic human interest for their value and not on any antique trappings. The rest are of our own day, and of these the best is that which gives the book its title. The theme of "The Fiery

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dive" might be described as a sexual version of "lady or tiger", the alternatives in this case being perfect companion or selfish prostitute. Mr. Armstrong leaves his question as open as did Mr. Stockton, and each reader will probably have to decide for himself whether the dénouement is satisfactory.

Mr. Armstrong is a good craftsman. There is a clear, unembellished directness about both his plots and their presentation which makes his characters, his scenes and his intentions readily recognizable at a glance. They are interesting to contemplate, too, and even pleasantly subtle, but he fails to make them significant either emotionally or intellectually. If the emotional reaction that one gets from a work of art in any medium is the real test of its value, then Mr. Armstrong is not an artist in the most exalted sense. But perhaps the mere fact that he provokes comparison with the best is the proof of his own worth.

NORAH MEADE

ANITA AGREES *by Theodora Benson* (HARPERS. $2.50)

THIS book is a comedy of manners written in satiric vein and set both in London and in the English countryside among blue hills and secret woodland ways. The story centers about Anita Franklin, afflicted with a combination of beauty and piety, in search of a platonic friendship. Suffering under a hypnosis induced by the religion of her forefathers, she is so utterly guided by secondary motives as to defeat her desire to deal fairly with herself and others. Making herself believe that she is seeking to do good, she does harm instead. The author deals with her heroine humorously and yet ruthlessly. Though she leaves the reader in no doubt as to the real Anita beneath the artificiality, she has succeeded also in portraying a wholly lovable character exemplifying the eternal feminine that has neither best nor worst.

The other characters are on the chess-board merely to afford plays for Anita. Gervase Holt, who the reader knows at the outset will eventually win Anita, is not a person but a type of hustling young business man who can be found in London, New York, or Richmond. The other actors appear as shadows of ordinary people. The novel is saved, however, by charm of style, by humorous auctorial interpolations, and by that lightness of touch which characterizes good satire.

EUDORA RAMSAY RICHARDSON

PAY DAY *by Nathan Asch* (BREWER & WARREN. $2.50)

JIM draws his clerk's wages and we follow him home in the subway, and then through all the variety of a weekly blow-out: meeting a waitress in Times Square, taking her to a movie he doesn't understand, losing her in the drunken excitement of a speakeasy, picking up another girl and then "passing out" to wander home again in the early hours of a summer morning. To spend one night with Jim is enough to grasp his routine existence of physical facts and pleasures, to uncover the empty sentimentality of his conscience, to understand his ignorant outlook on life. Mr. Asch has tried to make him, though typical, more than a mere type; to give us not only his thoughts on sex and money and his place in life but also his musings on trivialities and matters of moment. But it is only the type in him which rings true; Jim's more personal thoughts and actions miss fire, and do not bring him to life. It requires a miracle to make a study like this rise above its own level from document to art; and Mr. Asch cannot bring the miracle off.

The real merit of the book is incidental; it does not derive from the picture as a whole, or from the ironic counterpoint of the Sacco-Vanzetti execution, which is taking place as Jim goes about his evening. It lies in Mr. Asch's sense of atmosphere and manners—in his downtown New York at night, which captures all five of our senses; in his speakeasy scenes, breathing and dynamic; in his drink-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ers and dancers made unmistakable by mere conversation. These things are more than documentary; there is drama in them, movement, color. They point a moral for the rest of the book by suggesting the infinite difference between reality and fact.

IT'S NEVER OVER *by Morley Callaghan* (SCRIBNER'S. $2.50)

MORLEY CALLAGHAN reduces story-telling to its least common denominator: he merely states facts in understandable language. He says: *John read the paper; Lillian drank a cup of tea; John and Lillian made love*; and by recording such different things at the same emotional temperature in the novel, he suggests that they happen at the same emotional temperature in life. What results, of course, when both the style and the movement of a book are irreducibly simplified, is that the book has no emphasis and little vitality. In Mr. Callaghan's earlier work, which treated largely of surface physical life, there was, however colorlessly conveyed, a good deal of direct action; in *It's Never Over* the action is psychological, and suffers from the author's insensitiveness to mood and personality.

It's Never Over has a definite theme: the effect of a man's hanging upon three people: his sister Isabelle, his friend John who used to be in love with Isabelle, and Lillian who used to be in love with the dead man and is now in love with John. Fred Thompson's death, far from straightening out and defining these relationships, complicates, distracts and finally destroys them. Lillian breaks with John, John wants to murder Isabelle, and Isabelle herself dies. The problems involved are very real and are open to significant treatment. But Mr. Callaghan, while sensing the values of his story, fails to resolve them. He fails because, as I have said, there is no modulation of tempo, mood or dramatic inflection. This kills his story. He also fails because he treats his characters—who are rather complex and socially conscious people—exactly as in the past he treated his morons and roughnecks and country louts: as material not for the psychologist but for the behaviorist. And this kills his characters, who demand not observation but the keenest analysis. Only the greatest of novelists could have revealed, in so subtle a situation, the minds of his people through their actions. Mr. Callaghan has given no meaning at all to his story beyond the meaning of an initial idea. We close the book unmoved, unconvinced—and what is worse, uninvolved.

LOUIS KRONENBERGER

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BIOGRAPHY

C. E. MONTAGUE: A MEMOIR *by Oliver Elton* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $3.50)

C. E. MONTAGUE died in May, 1928, at the age of sixty-one. He had remained so young and keen that it is hard to think of him as having been one of Jowett's young men at Balliol—chronologically if not intellectually. Leaving Oxford he joined the staff of the *Manchester Guardian*, to which he was attached, except for the years of war, until 1925. He loved journalism and he was a bonny fighter. "He came," says Mr. Elton, "to hate a bad sentence like a bad smell and to revel in a good one as he might in a rose." Still more he hated a bad cause, and his thirty-five years of honorable and brilliant service make an inspiring record.

Out of Mr. Elton's tactful weaving together of narrative, letters, diary, reminiscences of friends, emerges a distinct portrait of the British gentleman of fine mind at his best. As an Irishman he might have claimed the clear vision of things English on which Mr. Shaw has prided himself. This aspect of him Mr. Elton sums up:

> He loved the face of England and her common people; and yet he was at heart something of a foreigner. He remained alien to our great caste-system and to our public schools with their traditions and *tabus*. Indeed, he never well understood them and retained a certain prejudice against them. He had no upper-class feeling; he was a gentleman, democratic by instinct and not merely on principle, caring for the man in the street and the Tommy in the trenches, and predisposed against any kind of mandarin, political, military, or educational.

One might reckon up any number of apparent contradictions in him, but they are all resolved in the depth and breadth of his character, his "passion for noble living".

In these days when young men are given to reporting the disastrous effect of Greek and Latin upon their minds, it may be observed that Montague was nourished on the classics, that in moments of intense feeling he quoted the *Æneid*—he knew the sixth book by heart—and that, in a larger way, the full activity of his eager mind was that of one to whom life without inquiry was not worth living. Whatever may prove to be the fate of his writings, Montague himself seems to have been finer than any of them. When one is oppressed by a sense of anemic pettiness, intellectual fopperies, general messiness of mind and character in oneself and others, it is good to breathe the strong, clean Alpine air that Montague carried with him. To know such men is to be delivered from a multitude of opinions.

DOUGLAS BUSH

BRAWNY WYCHERLEY *by Willard Connely* (SCRIBNER'S. $3.00)

WILLIAM WYCHERLEY was one of the most brilliant and attractive figures of the Restoration—a courtier and favorite of Charles II, a coffee-house wit beloved in the scintillating circle of Rochester and Sedley, a determined and mediocre society poet, a notable lover who shared with his monarch and with the great Duke of Marlborough the favors of the beautiful Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, a playwright whose comedies held their popularity on the English stage during four reigns. Wycherley was a great and successful gentleman who seems never to have been out of debt, and a great and successful lover who

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seems never to have been in love. Mr. Connely admires his hero intensely—his striding, masculinely assertive, warm-hearted hero, with his robustly graceful wit and his gracefully robust person. He has surrounded Wycherley here with all the color inherent in his character, and all the color it was possible to borrow from the amazingly colorful age in which he lived. Mr. Connely's style is glib, romantic, and popular. He has, in fact, sacrificed the results of a good deal of honest scholarship in order to secure the full and strikingly romantic effect of his narrative.

His account of Wycherley's long quarrel with Pope is entertaining, but somewhat too baldly drawn. It is easy to be harsh with Pope; and Wycherley was the sort of generous, great-hearted fellow whose cause aroused instant sympathy. But Mr. Connely has been swayed too far, has painted Wycherley entirely fair, and has withheld from the unhappy, ill-natured little spider, Alexander Pope, even the slender justice which was his due. A little additional sobriety might have increased vastly the value of what is, in any case, a swift and amusing account of Wycherley's career.

THE LIFE OF GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO *by Thomas Caldecot Chubb* (BONI. $4.00)

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO, the great precursor of the Italian Renaissance, is remembered in English-speaking countries for his authorship of the *Decameron*, for his friendship with Petrarch, for the perpetration of several amusing and ingenious anecdotes which furnished plots to Shakespeare and Chaucer, and for practically nothing else at all. Thomas Caldecot Chubb, in the most careful and elaborate study of Boccaccio ever undertaken in English, has attempted to supply the inevitable gaps in our knowledge. He has set out to recreate, from the mass of legend and allegory which remains to us, the vivid and human personality of a great man of letters who died six centuries ago. In view of the magnitude of his task, it is not surprising that Mr. Chubb has been only partially successful. He has had to deal with a vast quantity of secondary material of doubtful authority, and with reticent, irreconcilable, or flatly contradictory sources. Much of the incident of his story has been reconstructed, by what often seems a highly intuitive process, from the allegorical or autobiographical portions of Boccaccio's own work. It is greatly to Mr. Chubb's credit that from these slender sources he has managed to produce a readable, coherent and fairly plausible narrative.

Boccaccio, the illegitimate son of an upstart financier from the rustic environs of Certaldo, stubbornly resisted his father's efforts to turn him into a banker. He became instead a gay Neapolitan blade, writing passionate verses for the pleasure of his mistress. The downfall of his father's fortunes exiled Giovanni from the careless, amorous, roistering life which he loved, and precipitated him into the competition for public office. He gravitated from one noble protector to another, fighting poverty, disappointment and disease, until the years turned him from the laughing and pornographic romancer into a moral philosopher, from a gay sceptic into a sage. Much of the interest of Boccaccio's all too slender story is due to the quality of Mr. Chubb's style, which, if far from faultless according to conventional standards, has nevertheless a swift and vigorous and highly individual character.

MARGARET WALLACE

WILLIAM PITT, THE YOUNGER *by P. W. Wilson* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $3.00)

THERE are few more striking figures in English history than the subject of this biography. As Mr. Wilson begins his first chapter: "In William Pitt, the younger, we are confronted by a miracle of precocity". But far more remarkable than his becoming at twenty-four England's prime minister—for after all he was the son of Lord Chatham—he thereafter clung tenaciously to power, with one brief in-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

termission, for the rest of his life. He was the foremost man in England for nineteen years and his only rival in all Europe was the glamorous figure of Napoleon, whose star began to rise as that of Pitt began to sink. They were an unusual contrast, the ambitious egoist whose inspired sword plunged a continent into war and the coldly calculating financier and statesman who stood as the bulwark of British interests; but they were alike in their love of power and their love of country.

As the first modern biography of Pitt, this book had tremendous possibilities. Its author fully recognizes his opportunities and emphasizes his purpose to enable the reader of the twentieth century to see William Pitt as he was—"the man, his environment, the situations that he had to face, his triumph at the outset, the tragedy that overwhelmed him at the end". But Mr. Wilson has not entirely succeeded. The great fault of his book is oversimplification, an attempt to reduce the character and life of Pitt to easy terms and to explain his acts by comparing them with those of familiar figures of our own world.

The trouble is that Pitt does not lend himself to such elementary treatment. If he was a product of his age it is not enough to point out briefly how his age differed from ours. The background must be filled in. Furthermore, without unduly lionizing the subject of his biography, Mr. Wilson still does not explain the many inconsistencies of his career or what has been so often regarded as his betrayal of the liberal causes which he at first made his own. There is very sketchy treatment of the part Pitt played in the nervous reaction which swept over England at the time of the French Revolution.

If the object of a new biography of such a well-known figure as Pitt should be either the presentation of new facts or a fresh interpretation of life and character, it must be admitted that Mr. Wilson has added very little to what we know of the son of the Great Commoner. Yet his book is not without value. A former member of the House of Commons himself, the author presents an engrossing picture of England's parliamentary life at the close of the eighteenth century. He introduces us to many of the eminent figures of that period, of great debates in which a Fox, a Burke and a Sheridan, as well as Pitt, held the House entranced. He has made the story of Pitt's life dramatic and absorbing, writing consistently in a clear and engaging style. What he has done he has done well; we only wish he had done a little more.

FOSTER RHEA DULLES

THE DIARY OF TOLSTOY'S WIFE VOL. II (BREWER & WARREN. $3.50)

ONE sentence in this diary voices the problem about her husband which tortured the Countess Tolstoy through most of her married life. "What am I to him, anyway," she asks, "when I am not with him?" In her first diary she was subtly aware of her emotional dependence on him and the dangers it entailed. In this book she realizes his increasing independence, not to say indifference. It covers six years of the fourth decade of their life together, and shows her mothering her children and their father, managing the property, copying Tolstoy's books, and constantly complaining of his growing coldness to her and their family. Whatever pleasure they share is largely physical, and of this she is, as always, ashamed:

> I am terribly disappointed with myself. Lyova woke me up this morning with passionate kisses. . . . But it is all physical, and that is the secret of our quarrels. . . . All my life I have dreamed sentimentally of an ideal and spiritual relationship—but not that.

A woman of considerable personal and intellectual pride, she bitterly resented her exclusion from his world of ideas. She could not understand that genius is of necessity selfish and lonely. "The world," she cries, "to him is merely the environment of his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

genius, and he takes from it only what can serve his work. He discards the rest. . . . My whole spiritual life is of no interest to him, and he has no use for it."

It never apparently occurred to her to take an interest in his. His "conversion" drove her merely to fury, and she had only contempt and hatred for his followers, "the dark ones". Where a more generous-minded, tolerant and affectionate wife might have tried at least to sympathize with the prophet-child, she was scornful and saw only vanity and the thirst for fame. That there was in the Countess herself a core of unfed egotism is revealed by her record of her visit to the Emperor. The removal of the ban on *The Kreutzer Sonata* she regarded as a triumph of her charm and intelligence, not as an artistic or moral victory for her husband. She could not understand, either, his wrath at the means she used to get his book sanctioned. There were scenes!

That both Tolstoys were sadly lacking in that humor which James Stephens calls "the sanity of the mind" is abundantly clear from these diaries. The reader's sympathy is with the Count when he drags back home through the snow the hysterical, almost unclad wife who had run out to commit suicide. But the sympathy is no less with the Countess when she returns to a once comfortable establishment to find this:

> Mud and dirt in all three rooms where I lived with Lev Nikolayevich. Four mouse-traps which clicked mercilessly all the time with the mice they were catching. A cold, bleak house . . . no servants and deadly stillness everywhere; painful and gloomy is my life at Yasnaya Polyana these days.

To this his "conversion" had brought her. No wonder she loved him best when he was "weak, kind and normal". But she was honest enough to admit even after forty years of married life that fate "has not been so unkind to me after all". Despite everything the Countess Tolstoy loved her husband.

NORAH MEADE

UNAFRAID: A LIFE OF ANNE HUTCHINSON *by Winifred King Rugg* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $3.50)

AN AMERICAN JEZEBEL: THE LIFE OF ANNE HUTCHINSON *by Helen Augur* (BRENTANO. $3.50)

ANNE HUTCHINSON: A BIOGRAPHY *by Edith Curtis* (WASHBURN & THOMAS. $2.50)

ANNE HUTCHINSON'S REFUGE IN THE WILDERNESS AND THE BURNING OF THE VILLAGE OF WHITE PLAINS *by Otto Hufeland* (PRIVATELY PRINTED)

IN HIS introduction to Edith Curtis's brief, bald account of Anne Hutchinson's misfortunes in the Boston of our earliest forefathers, M. A. DeWolfe Howe notes, with an air of being fairly well satisfied, that the "New England Jezebel", "the first American club woman", the "Joan of Arc" who so harried the peace of Governor Winthrop, has escaped the frantic clutches of the predatory "creative biographers". But alas for the immortality of his pronouncement, it has not been allowed to stand for five minutes. For here, coming up to the publishers' wire neck and neck with the Curtis book, are two "creative biographies" of Mistress Hutchinson, neither of which does any palpable violence to what is probably the truth about the Antinomian controversy that upset the Massachusetts Bay Colony between 1636 and 1638, and both of which are worth more to the general reader than Miss Curtis's essentially arid chronicle.

It was quite evidently written in the stars that Anne Hutchinson would be pounced upon by those pardonable pirates of literature who comb the Main of history in search of unexploited individuals to galvanize into posthumous life. For Mistress Hutchinson, aside from the inherent interest of her vicissitudes, is important to any history of New England, and hence to any history of the United States. With Roger Williams, she was a pioneer in a movement that was, in the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nineteenth century, to shake up the intellectual life of New England, to loosen the grip of a Calvinism that came down in a direct line from Anne's persecutors, the Rev. John Wilson of Boston's first church, and Governor Winthrop, who had good reasons to fear unchecked liberty of conscience in a settlement that was precariously perched on the edge of a wilderness. Briefly, Anne Hutchinson was of the breed whose later exemplars went by the diverse names of Quakers, Unitarians, Transcendentalists. If she had come in the days of William Ellery Channing, all would have been well for her physical health. But she came before her time. A theocracy such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony had no place for a woman who disobeyed the mandate of St. Paul and spoke out in criticism of the wardens of the elect of a Calvinistic God.

There is scarcely room here to go into the history of Anne Hutchinson, or to argue her distinctions between Puritan ministers who preached a covenant of works and those who preached a covenant of grace. Both Miss Augur and Miss Rugg follow the same outline, with minor differences of emphasis. Miss Curtis eschews the English phase of Anne Hutchinson's life entirely, which is, perhaps, the part of wisdom, for the documents concerning her days in the London and the Lincolnshire of the early Stuarts are sparse. Miss Augur handles the theological disputes and disputations more capably than Miss Rugg, although both biographers are inclined to make light of what were, after all, tremendously important distinctions in the time of the Reformation. But—to even the balance—Miss Rugg is more adept at suggesting background; she does a better job of evoking the late Elizabethan age and its slow blending with the England of Archbishop Laud; and, by putting Anne in her proper setting, she achieves a more perfect "creative" biography. Her prose, too, is firmer than that of Miss Augur.

In the matter of prejudices, Miss Augur is the more acerb. She writes with more of an animus against Winthrop, with less pleading for John Cotton, the minister of St. Botolph's in old Boston whose emigration to Massachusetts was the cause of Anne's desertion of Stuart Lincolnshire. The obstetrical details of Anne's miscarriage in Rhode Island, which so fascinated Governor Winthrop, are set forth in detail by Miss Augur, with the animus against Winthrop quite evidently in mind. Miss Rugg, on the other hand, is content to give the broad fact of the miscarriage which Boston construed as a mark of the Old One, a punishment for erring against the way of the Congregational churches. As for John Cotton, the teacher of Boston's first church, he comes off badly in all three biographies. Vernon Parrington has said that Cotton came dangerously near to being a "shuffler". The accounts of Anne's trial, banishment and excommunication show that he was a shuffler.

In the matter of invented conversations, Miss Rugg shows some skill. Usually she tells the reader what is, and what is not, conjecture. One who is uninitiated in the way of sources would be more at ease, however, if she had cited her authority for the little lecture on pride delivered to Anne by John Cotton on page eighty-nine.

The contribution of Mr. Hufeland to Hutchinsonana is devoted to a search for exact data about Anne's last refuge in the Dutch territory of what is now Westchester County. He shows that we know something about Anne's death at the hands of the Mohicans, but finds no definite evidence of the site of her last home in America.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

DE SOTO AND THE CONQUISTADORES *by Theodore Maynard* (LONGMANS, GREEN. $3.50)

THERE is nothing of the romantic novel and the super-film in this book, but it does not lack in action or color. Mr. Maynard is a competent historian who realizes that atmosphere is as important as events, and that mo-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tives overshadow men. His method is, perhaps, the only one adequate to describe the tumultuous times and the complex adventurers of the Spanish conquest of America.

For the Conquistador was a strange combination of explorer and missioner who sought gold and rich provinces but who was just as fervent in his efforts to bring recalcitrant natives to the salvation the Church held out to them. To the author there is no doubt as to the sincerity of the Spanish leaders nor does he feel that their ruthless methods were as black as they have been painted. By adroitly forcing one to accept the standards of the age the author wins his argument. Rapine for the Cross seems no more unbelievable than slavery for oil.

One finds this same gracious fanaticism in De Soto while with Pizarro in Peru and later in his own tragic attempt to duplicate the process in Florida. He is always a hero to his biographer who, if forced by authorities to blame him for some atrocity, exculpates him in a footnote. But he is a generous, obstinate, impetuous hero whose very faults were grand. The book is, however, more of a history than a biography, and Mr. Maynard, himself a poet, knows the value of vigorous prose.

PAUL ALLEN

BYRON *by André Maurois* (APPLETON. $5.00)

WHETHER M. Maurois's *Byron* will have the extraordinary popular appeal of his *Ariel* and his *Disraeli* is of course yet in the lap of the gods. That it will be widely read is certain; everything M. Maurois writes today is. And this is all to the good, for M. Maurois, despite the fact that he belongs to the school of the New Biographers, is both a scholar and an artist. There were times in *Ariel* when his sense of malicious humor may have stained the integrity of the historian, but on the whole he gave a delightful and probably true picture of Shelley and his preposterous *ménage*. That having succeeded with Shelley it was natural that he should soon turn his attention to Byron, for Byron had played not a small figure in *Ariel*, as of course he must play in any life of Shelley. And M. Maurois's *Byron* is an admirable and really important book, both because of its style and because of its presentation of facts which have escaped most of Byron's biographers. That M. Maurois has said the last word on Byron it would be foolish to assert—the last word on this excessively complicated character will never be said. Search as we will, the complete Byron will always elude us—perhaps because there was no complete Byron, but rather two Byrons. This at least was what Byron himself believed, though those trying to pierce the mystery might well come to believe that two Byrons were all too small a number.

M. Maurois himself makes no attempt to sum up Byron in any phrase or set of phrases. There are certain things he makes abundantly clear—that Byron was a supreme egoist, that he was selfish often to brutality, that he was in early life a sentimentalist and that, cynical as he at times was, his sentimentalism remained with him to the end, that he had a generous heart, that he admired the conventional virtues and that he was an inveterate comedian. After reading his life how true becomes M. Maurois's statement: "Lady Melbourne professed a systematic libertinism which Byron admired and strove to imitate; but he never entirely attained it; there was a streak of tenderness in him that remained vulnerable to the slightest touch". M. Maurois too holds completely to a belief in Byron's incest with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, and he makes out a case which it is hard to controvert. Byron's correspondence with Lady Melbourne, and the letters exchanged between Lady Byron, Augusta Leigh, Medora Leigh and Ada Byron make it almost impossible to doubt Byron's passion and the fact that Medora Leigh was its fruit. Only the incorrigible hypocrisy of the Victorian age could have been able to throw a veil over what was only too evident.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As to Byron the poet M. Maurois deliberately makes no judgment. He is interested in him solely as a man, and his excerpts from his poems he uses simply as revelations of his character. But, fascinating as he makes Byron, his subordinate pictures are equally fascinating. The eighteenth-century Lady Melbourne, Mary Chaworth, Annabella, Augusta Leigh, Lady Oxford, La Guiccioli, Hobhouse —what a gallery in real life, and a gallery which Maurois paints with sympathy, understanding, and gusto. In them M. Maurois is a dramatist, yet one who never sacrifices the truth for mere effect. We live with them and we know them, just as we live with and know the boyhood Byron and the Byron of those last superb days in Greece when he at last became the man of his boyhood dreams. The Byron of the days between M. Maurois does not give to us with the same clarity, despite the fact that he gives the separate incidents with admirable vividness. Yet it would be unfair to blame this on M. Maurois; it is due to the contradictions in Byron himself, a man who in his journal could show himself so absolutely sincere, and yet who in his acts was so often the comedian. And then how Maurois can write! Such touches as: "The delightful Lady Jersey was there, murmurous with words and necklaces"; delicately malicious phrases such as this are sprinkled throughout the book, yet the phrases never offend or distract us from the main theme. Maurois's *Byron* is a brilliant book, but it is also a sincere one. Indeed it is a lesson for those who would write in the spirit of the New Biography.

LOBAGOLA, AN AFRICAN SAVAGE'S OWN STORY *by Bata Kindai Amgoza Ibn Lobagola* (KNOPF. $3.00)

WHETHER this book belongs in the category of *Trader Horn* and *The Cradle of the Deep*, or whether it is the veritable story of an African savage gone civilized, it is certainly hugely entertaining. It is written exceedingly well, but those who have ever heard Lobagola speak realize that he is a master of the spoken tongue and therefore it is altogether probable that he at least wrote the book himself. It is the things which happen in the book which raise at least a moderate doubt as to position of the writer's sense of fact and fancy. Lobagola's relations with his "Young Master" in Scotland, for instance, sound a little too much like Friday's relations to Robinson Crusoe to ring quite true. There are also some rather tall tales of life in the African jungle, especially in regard to animals, yet the story of his childhood is on the whole extremely poignant and fascinating.

Lobagola has common sense, and a malicious humor which is often exhilarating. "I do not say that I altogether approve of polygamy, but I do say, choose the lesser of two evils; that is, take half a dozen wives and be true to them, and do not take one wife and be false to her." So writes the "civilized" Lobagola looking back on his own youthful bevy of wives. And then again: "It is impossible for a man to love equally six wives, but it is not impossible for six wives to love one husband. Therefore since our men cannot love all their wives alike, they do not love any of them". Yes, despite his dark skin, Lobagola is a philosopher!

Lobagola himself is an African belonging to a tribe which he thinks is of Jewish descent. He was carried off to Scotland when a boy, raised in the household of a kindly Scot and, after several trips back to Africa, realized that he was no longer at home in the jungle. He came to America, enlisted as a soldier in the British army during the War, and finally renounced his Judaism and became a Catholic. He at present is living in Harlem and is a successful lecturer. Taken at its face value his book is a distinct contribution to an understanding of the Negro. It is evident that Lobagola himself prefers Christian civilization to African savagery and his story gives abundant reason why. In one virtue alone does he give preference to the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

savage—that of truth. To Lobagola the civilized man is a liar and a hypocrite, but after all he does not blink the fact that hypocrisy is to be preferred to cruelty and superstition. So to the radical there will be small comfort in this testimony of Bata Kindai Amgoza Ibn Lobagola.

GRENVILLE VERNON

COLUMBUS: DON QUIXOTE OF THE SEAS *by Jacob Wassermann* (LITTLE, BROWN. $3.50)

As a novelist Wassermann's first interest is in the hearts and minds of men, in the motives that drive them and the fears that hold them back. Such is his interest in Columbus. What chance led him to delve into the life of the great discoverer he does not tell, but the fascination of this man who has stood as an enigma to historians and biographers drew Wassermann on to study Columbus more and more closely. And from this study grew the picture of Columbus that the author presents with such convincing strokes against a background of poverty, intrigue, romance, fanatic courage and unthinkable cruelty.

Though Wassermann compares Columbus to Don Quixote he never tries to twist his character to fit the mold. As one watches the unfolding career of this Italian seaman with a single fixed idea, it becomes clearer and clearer that Columbus, like the knight of La Mancha, wrapped himself ever tighter in a dream cloak through which nothing that might contradict his notion could penetrate. Men of his time considered him a fanatic and they were right. Off the coast of Cuba, Wassermann relates, he compelled his crews to sign a paper swearing they were off the Indies, with dire threats if they should recant. Before he died Columbus, in his voluminous correspondence wrote: "For my voyage to the Indies I had no help from reason, mathematics, or maps of the world—it was but a fulfilment of what had been told by the prophet Isaiah".

Wassermann's *Columbus* is a biography worth reading. In these days of romantic biography it is strong meat, realism that makes no concessions. It neither vilifies nor idealizes the man whom everyone disliked, yet whose burning eloquence consumed all barriers to his accomplishment. No reader will forget this harsh figure from whom the fierce vicissitudes of life beat all joy, all humor, all nobility; Columbus, who first spoke that mighty phrase, "the New World", yet whose vacillating incompetence allowed the Eden he had discovered to become a hell of cruelty that put the Inquisition to shame.

CAPTAIN COOK: NAVIGATOR AND DISCOVERER *by Maurice Thiery* (MCBRIDE. $3.50)

In 1741 the determination and conviction of knowing what he wanted to do most sent James Cook, at the age of thirteen, down the road to the sea and on to his ultimate fame as one of the foremost navigators and explorers the world has known. Maurice Thiery has chosen his material well, selecting much of it from Cook's own journal and logs. He depicts the adventures of Cook from his apprenticeship as cabin boy to his final high rank as Captain in the Royal Navy under George III. Cook's intrepid courage, his unending perseverance, and his extraordinary ability as a navigator achieved almost more for the science of geography than the efforts of any other single man. Among his discoveries were the Society Islands and the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands. He discovered and surveyed the Western Coast of America above 43° N., a distance of more than thirty-five hundred miles. He determined the nearness of Asia to America in the Arctic, and shattered forever the earlier explorers' dreams of passing from the Atlantic to the Pacific either Eastward or Westward.

Thiery has taken the most interesting and important episodes in the life and voyages

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Captain Cook, and the reader follows him with eagerness on each successive trip. Cook's contacts with the natives of the islands and new lands were for the most part friendly. But he met his death at the hands of the Hawaiians who turned suddenly from friendliness to hostility. Although Cook was a rather stern disciplinarian he had an unbounded sympathetic understanding of his fellow men. He was determined to preserve the health and welfare of his seamen in an age when a sailor's life was little better than a convict's. His men were devoted to him, and begged to be taken on every voyage, and he proved that it was possible to voyage for three consecutive years without peril to their health and lives. At his death he was mourned by the whole world.

WILLIAM HOWELL WELLS

EMILY DICKINSON: THE HUMAN BACKGROUND OF HER POETRY *by Josephine Pollitt* (HARPERS. $4.00)

To A biographer on the prowl, the enigmatic figure of Emily Dickinson must appear most inviting. Her cloistered life, her unfulfilled love, her fantastic fear of human contacts, the clipped and cryptic mysticism of her writing give her a pixie quality that is supremely fascinating. She is perpetually in flight to the elfin mound—as successful in eluding biographers as she was in evading her contemporaries. As a result her life story is almost as desperately conjectural as that of Shakespeare.

Of all the Dickinson enigmas, none is more teasing than her love affair. In April, 1862, Emily sent a pert, provocative note to Thomas Wentworth Higginson in which she made cryptic reference to a friend who was "not contented I be his scholar, so he left the land". Sixty-two years later, in *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*, her niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, partially interpreted that remark by her guarded reference to a love affair during Emily's visit to Washington and Philadelphia in 1854 which was broken off because the man was already married. The *Further Poems*, published last year, made it evident that this love episode played an important, perhaps a decisive, part in shaping Emily's life and writings. It is to the clarification of this episode that Miss Pollitt's book is chiefly dedicated. She identifies the man as Edward Hunt, an army officer who was the first husband of Emily's childhood friend, later famous as Helen Hunt Jackson. Her identification is based chiefly on a statement of Higginson's that "Hunt interested her more than any other man she ever saw". Her theory is possible; I do not think it probable. The discrepancies are too great; the circumstantial evidence too tenuous. From the same materials as sound a case might be built against the Reverend Charles Wadsworth, whom Emily also met during that fated trip to Washington and Philadelphia and to whom she refers with deep emotion in the last long letter that she wrote. Oddly enough, neither Lieutenant Hunt nor Dr. Wadsworth is referred to by name either in the *Life and Letters*, or in the two volumes of letters edited by Mrs. Todd.

The importance of the episode does not lie in the identification of the man, but in the interpretation of its effect upon Emily's verse. As Miss Pollitt's title indicates, she has confined herself to the human element and has made no attempt at literary criticism. She is further, indeed fatally, handicapped by having been denied permission to quote the most important documents of all—Emily's own letters and poems. She has paraphrased valiantly, she has studied lovingly and she has written pleasantly, but the odds are too great. Her entire book does not evoke the living Emily as vividly as Higginson's brief objective account of their interview in the darkened parlor of Amherst: "In glided a plain, shy, little person with two day lilies, saying, under her breath, 'These are my introduction. Forgive me if I am frightened' ".

R. N. LINSCOTT

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ESSAYS AND CRITICISM

RESTORATION TRAGEDY, 1660-1720 *by Bonamy Dobrée* (Oxford. $3.00)

THIS is not another literary history; "it attempts rather to define a type and trace its development". It is a companion volume to the author's *Restoration Comedy*, and exhibits once more his thorough knowledge of the period, and critical acumen. It well represents that scholarly literary criticism, at once authoritative, discriminating and graceful, in which English men of letters so generally excel us, perhaps because not disciplined to the austerities of doctoral dissertations.

Mr. Dobrée states his object as threefold: "to see why Restoration tragedy took the form known as 'heroic', and what the word implies; . . . to distinguish the characteristics of some of the greater writers of the period, to see what were the objects they actually created; and lastly, to see what lessons can be learnt for the writing of tragedy at the present day".

It was an emotional need of the time, a thirst for admiration, he thinks, which gave rise to the heroic drama. Admiration being made central, pity and fear were subordinated, and the peculiar type of excessiveness which we to-day find so extraordinary in that drama was a natural development. Great classical tragedy also, it is true, rouses admiration. Heroic drama fell short, the author suggests, because "the dramatists of that day were trying to express romantic ideas in a form specially evolved for the classical". This is a neat and suggestive thesis, but we think hardly radical enough: the heroic drama was short-lived not because of the unsuitability of the form but because of the excessiveness of the material. Such melodramatic rant, sham and pose would be equally ephemeral in any form.

General observations are followed by chapters on criticism, on verse form, on a comparison between versions of the Cleopatra story, and on the tragedies of Dryden, Lee, Otway, Rowe, Congreve and Addison. The criticism is always pleasant, clear and sane. It covers, however, familiar ground. One might wish that Mr. Dobrée had attempted one further task for which he is peculiarly fitted: the psychological explanation of a phenomenon unparalleled in dramatic history, that of the simultaneous production of two such utterly different types of plays as heroic tragedy and Restoration comedy; the one all moral propriety and idealistic absurdity; the other all immoral cynicism, and Hogarthian realism.

In his Conclusion, the author's partiality for his material leads him to a too favorable judgment. Though, as he admits, Restoration tragedy distorted the causes for admiration and played too much on love; though "it was an art of escape, not of profound realization", yet, he declares, "it does occupy a high place, higher than that to be claimed by any drama that has succeeded it, with the exception of Ibsen's and Strindberg's". By "drama" he doubtless means tragic drama; and perhaps he bases his claim solely on *All for Love*. But the heroic kind, as a *genre*, is melodramatic rather than tragic, and hence scarcely comparable to Ibsen and Strindberg; and certainly in the heroic kind one would infinitely prefer to the Restoration product even the absurdities of Victor Hugo, not to speak of Rostand's grace, subtlety and wit. We remain of the low opinion which we formerly had of "heroic tragedy": it is romance of escape, indeed, and pretty crude of its kind.

ALAN REYNOLDS THOMPSON

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POETS AND PLAYWRIGHTS *by E. E. Stoll* (UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS. $3.00)

MR. STOLL is a scholar and critic who in all his writings has kept one end steadily in view, the fuller understanding of great literature. In spite of modern temptations to excessive philosophizing on the one hand and gritty excavating on the other, he has remained that rare thing among scholars, an esthetic critic. Perhaps no other writer has brought to the illumination of Shakespeare such knowledge of the drama, not merely of England but of all ages and countries. When we compare current views of Shakespeare with those that prevailed throughout the nineteenth century it is a simple fact—whatever particular questions remain disputable—that our clearer and cooler appreciation is due to Mr. Stoll as much as to any individual though some reviewers of his *Shakespeare Studies* a few years ago felt moved to bite the hand that had fed them.

The present handsome volume collects some essays (which had already appeared in print) on Cleopatra, Henry V, "Certain Fallacies and Irrelevancies in the Literary Scholarship of the Day", and other subjects. About three-fifths of the volume is new, including "Shakespeare and the Moderns" of over eighty pages, and papers on Spenser and Milton. The longest piece is a kind of modern *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, in which Mr. Stoll, using Corneille, Racine, and Ibsen as his chief touchstones, gathers into one broad survey his ripe conclusions on Elizabethan dramatic art in general and Shakespeare's in particular. Like Dryden, Mr. Stoll is fully conscious of the virtues of classical and modern dramatic art, of which he has many true and suggestive things to say, but he finds a greater virtue still in Shakespeare's plastic power, his superb illusion of life. "For it is in the style—it is as a writer—that Shakespeare works his wonders. . . . As the characters are creations, so is their speech, wherein they have their being".

In the essays on Spenser and Milton Mr. Stoll constantly lights up familiar lines with fresh appreciation. He dwells upon the romantic side of Spenser, and records a vigorous protest against recent "re-interpretation" of Milton which, in opposing a wholly Puritanic conception, has gone to the other extreme. There are debatable verdicts, as there must be in any good critic. Mr. Stoll exaggerates, I think, Spenser's classical attainments, and unduly minimizes his influence upon Milton, the nature of which Milton seems to indicate in *Areopagitica*. Nor is it easy to accept the view that the humanist "sets the spirit and the flesh, Christianity and paganism pretty much on a level". But, in relation to Mr. Stoll's main purposes, such points have no great importance, and do not lessen the value of a book of disinterested literary criticism which sends one back to some great poets with quickened insight and sympathy.

VISION AND VESTURE: A STUDY OF WILLIAM BLAKE IN MODERN THOUGHT *by Charles Gardner* (DUTTON. $2.00)

THIS book calls itself a revised edition. The only evidence of revision I have found is the omission of some words contained in the dedication of the 1916 edition. It does not then take account of the voluminous Blakeana of recent years and suffers accordingly. But the book was the product of ardor, knowledge and insight, and, as one of the pioneer documents in the exposition of Blake's gospel, it has its merits. Of course it has the rhapsodical aberrations which are the usual signs of complete discipleship.

Half of the book is devoted to Blake himself, the other half to a rather bewildering list of prophets more or less akin to him, from Goethe, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Strindberg down to Shaw, Yeats, Mrs. Besant, Mrs. Eddy. Mr. Gardner, considering Blake one of the greatest of artists and teachers, ex-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pounds and glorifies his conception of the Real Man, the man who, freed from the shackles of reason, attains wholeness and unity through imagination and impulse. The critic anticipated some of the directions which later criticism has taken, not always wisely. For it must be said that Blake's best expositors are not Blake's best friends. The more clearly the prophetic books are explained, the more chaotic and unimpressive they become. Such books as Mr. Gardner's, Mr. Damon's monumental interpretation, the recent work of M. Saurat, and others, are more damaging to Blake's exalted claims than any hostile criticism can be. Amid all the mass of turbid occultism it is reassuring to find an estimate of Blake at once so sympathetic and so just as Mr. Basil de Sélincourt's introduction to the volume lately included in the World's Classics.

DOUGLAS BUSH

ESSAYS IN SATIRE *by Ronald Knox* (DUTTON. $2.50)

FATHER RONALD KNOX is not, despite his enthusiastic blurbist, "perhaps the greatest satirical power since the days of Alexander Pope", but in his *Essays in Satire* he proves himself an amusing spoofer, and in one of his essays, "Reunion All Round", something very much more. Father Knox is, of course, a conservative, but he is one of the school of Chesterton—that is, he is of the school, minus the paradox. "Reunion All Round", which is the *pièce de résistance* of the present book, is written in the style and even in the orthography of the late seventeenth century religious tracts, and its subtitle is in itself a delight: "Or Jael's Hammer Laid Aside, and the Milk of Human Kindness Beaten up into Butter and Served in a Lordly Dish. Being a Plea for the Inclusion within the Church of England of all Mahometans, Jews, Buddhists, Brahmins, Papists, and Atheists, submitted to the consideration of the British Public". From which point Father Knox proceeds with a deliciously sly humor to ridicule that portion of the modern religious world which is throwing aside all dogma in order to embrace in one fold all religions and no-religions. In this essay Father Knox shows himself a true ironist whose rapier is no less deadly in that it is untipped with gall. In somewhat lighter vein, but using the same method, are "A New Cure for Religion", and "The New Sin", the latter of which might have been written by Max Beerbohm himself.

The rest of the book is taken up largely with skits ridiculing the tribe of literary ghouls who are always finding either that some author didn't write his works or at least wrote only a part of them. These essays include "The Identity of the Pseudo-Bunyan", "The Authorship of 'In Memoriam'", and "Materials for a Boswellian Problem", while the seriousness of the academic literary critic is exquisitely spoofed in "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes". In the latter there is among other things a learned discussion of "the literary affinities of Dr. Watson's masterly style". And for good measure we have Freud satirized in "Jottings From a Psycho-Analyst's Note-Book", and the radio announcer—who is apparently as preposterous in England as he often is here—burlesqued in "A Forgotten Interlude". In short Father Knox is a satirist, but not of the line of Pope or Swift. He belongs rather to the type of Gilbert, though a Gilbert of a slightly sterner will.

GRENVILLE VERNON

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A VARIED SHELF

THE RISE AND FALL OF GERMANY'S COLONIAL EMPIRE *by Mary Evelyn Townsend* (MACMILLAN. $5.00)

DR. TOWNSEND has caught something of the drama of one of the most spectacular episodes in history in this carefully documented, well written and above all clear and concise, story of Germany's amazing rise to colonial power and even more abrupt loss of every square inch of her territory outside of Europe. In his introduction to the book, Professor Carlton J. H. Hayes compares the experience of Germany to that of France in the eighteenth century, but points out that Germany's expansion was more rapid and her colonial collapse even more complete than were the rise and fall of the old French empire.

The colonial ambitions of Germany played an important rôle in the clash of national interests which led to the World War. They brought her again and again into conflict with the other powers and Dr. Townsend traces skilfully the devious course by which the Imperial Government tried to reconcile them to those of England, and, after departing from Bismarck's sage policy of always subordinating colonial interests to those of foreign policy, veered back too late toward the *rapprochement* which on the very eve of the war held out the hope of a new policy of Anglo-German coöperation.

Only second to the historical value of the book as the first complete account of Germany's colonial policy is the evidence it submits to show that in her administration of her colonies Germany was no better and no worse than her imperialistic rivals. Another war myth is slain by the author's record of the educational and humanitarian program which in 1914 was fully under way. In her account of German policy in Morocco and in the story of the rivalry between Germany, England and the United States in Samoa, Dr. Townsend is a little too brief. She relies too much upon her German sources and does not give the full picture of events which might have resulted from consulting other authorities. Nor is the account of Germany's attitude during the Spanish-American War entirely satisfactory. There is no mention of the famous incident in Manila Bay other than a statement to the effect that the resulting outburst of anti-German feeling in the American press "served to demonstrate that the United States was determined to annex the Philippines and that Great Britain would support her"—a remark hardly justified by opinion at that time. But on the whole the book is an excellent one and surprisingly interesting.

FOSTER RHEA DULLES

LINCOLN AT GETTYSBURG *by William E. Barton* (BOBBS-MERRILL. $4.00)

DR. BARTON has been an inveterate delver in Lincoln lore. He digs deeply and usually meets with reward. The attempt this time is to discover what Lincoln intended to say; what he said; what he was reported to have said; what he wished he had said. The last thought is a bit nebulous, since critics and time have agreed that what he did say was precisely the right thing, uttered in the right way and at the right time. Dr. Barton devotes much learning to suggestion and origin, which, after all, cannot affect the perfectly molded result. The Gettysburg Address does not need vindication. It is graven deep upon

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the annals of the nation. There is, however, much more in the book. Everything appertaining to Lincoln and Gettysburg is there. It is an admirable piece of research, accurate and interesting. Dr. Barton discovers that the various published versions of the speech contained twenty-eight errors; that the Associated Press inserted "applause" where there was none; that it did not end in "reverent silence", and that a badly bored audience which had stood two hours or so of Edward Everett's polished verbiage, were taken by surprise when Lincoln stopped speaking at the end of three minutes, assuming he had just begun. John Hay, a Lincoln secretary, recorded that "in a firm, free way, with more grace than is his wont" he "said his half-dozen lines of consecration". There is evidence that the President did not think he had scored and felt small beside the magniloquent Everett, even though the latter was complimentary. Once more we learn how many things do not become important until long after they have happened.

NEW LETTERS AND PAPERS OF LINCOLN *compiled by Paul M. Angle* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $5.00)

MR. ANGLE, who is in charge of the affairs of the Lincoln Memorial Association, at Springfield, Illinois, has carefully swept up hitherto ungarnered items from Lincoln's hand and made them into an intelligent and well-arranged source-book. Speeches that escaped Nicolay and Hay may be found here, and several political notes of value as showing the practical politician Lincoln was. Several letters to Mrs. Lincoln, penned while he was a member of Congress, illustrate his tenderness and wisdom. He had just "got what I think a very pretty set of shirt-bosom studs —modest little ones, jet in gold, only costing 50 cents apiece or $1.50 for the whole". He suggests: "Suppose you do not prefix the 'Hon.' to the address on your letters to me any more. I like the letters very much but I would rather they should not have that upon them. It is not necessary, as I suppose you have thought, to have them come free". Indeed she hardly had thought that, but was visiting her relations in Kentucky, and wasn't missing the chance to let it be known that her "Abe" was a congressman! "When you were here," he notes, "I thought you hindered me some in doing business; but now, having nothing but business—no vanity—it has grown exceedingly tasteless to me." He would have her "enjoy herself in every possible way", but "is there no danger of wounding the feelings of your good father by being too openly intimate with the Wickliffe family?"

Naturally a book of this sort contains a deal of chaff, being the leavings from sixty-five years of scrapings, but the grain salvaged is good.

DON C. SEITZ

THE TRUTH ABOUT WAGNER *by Philip Dutton Hurn and Waverly Lewis Root* (STOKES. $3.00)

THERE can be no question about the importance of the new Wagner material contained in the collection of the Hon. Mrs. Willoughby Burrell, the content of which is sometimes quoted but more often merely referred to in this book, but it is a pity that it should have first been given to the public in such an incomplete form and in a book which is confused, formless, and in many other ways absolutely unsatisfactory. The authors of this book have apparently been permitted a cursory view of the Wagner documents in the Burrell safe-deposit box in London, and have rushed forth to herald their discovery to the world without ever having taken, or been given, the time to digest and copy the material they had seen. It has been known for a long time that this collection, the fruit of a lifetime search by Mrs. Burrell, contained a priceless amount of material on the life of Richard Wagner, including the famous "lost letter" which

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Minna Wagner intercepted on its way to Mathilde Wesendonck and which precipitated Wagner's break with his first wife. Messrs. Hurn and Root have incorporated this letter in their book, as well as excerpts from Wagner's love letters to Minna in the endeavor to prove that, contrary to Cosima Wagner's statements, Wagner had really deeply loved his first wife, and that it was Minna and Mathilde who had inspired him in his great music, not Cosima. The latter probably needed no proof, for all the world knows that Wagner's great period was when he was married to Minna and during his love-affair with Frau Wesendonck. That Minna "inspired" him would perhaps be putting it a little too strong, but that she was a good, a loving and a long-suffering wife is certain, and that she made possible much of his music is likewise probable. It did not need the "lost letter", interesting and slightly ridiculous as it is, to prove that Wagner was enamoured of Mathilde during the writing of *Tristan*. But, badly handled as is the material, *The Truth About Wagner* pretty conclusively proves that Wagner genuinely loved Minna, and that she was far from the nonentity pictured by Cosima and given by indirection in the pages of Wagner's autobiography.

One whole chapter is devoted to the charge of Nietzsche that Wagner was the son of Ludwig Geyer, and though this chapter is entitled "I am the son of Ludwig Geyer", no further proof is offered than Nietzsche's statement that these words opened the original manuscript of *Mein Leben*. We are given to understand that a copy of the original privately printed autobiography is in the Burrell Collection, but Messrs. Hurn and Root do not state that these words occur in it. It is to be hoped that this collection will be conscientiously handled. When the material has been sifted and digested it will undoubtedly prove a needed corrective to Wagner's *Mein Leben*, written and censored as it undoubtedly was by Cosima Wagner. But it must be done carefully and exhaustively, and with more than a mere desire to prove that Minna was the good angel of Wagner and Cosima his evil one.

GRENVILLE VERNON

THE CRUSADES: IRON MEN AND SAINTS *by Harold Lamb* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $3.00)

It is a thrilling story of mixed horror and exaltation that Harold Lamb, chronicler of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, has to tell in his account of the first of the crusades, and he is careful not to spoil it by adopting the tone of the Higher Criticism. He might have, with William Graham Sumner, written down the crusades as unfortunate examples of "mania and mass delusion", but that would have been to spoil his drama. What he has done is to take the crusaders upon their own terms: he honors their purposes, their propulsions, and he strives to preserve the flavor of the chronicles upon which he levies for his material. There is not a sneer at the eleventh century in the book; it is dedicated to "the uncounted thousands who died in the crusades", and it even preserves a tone of detachment and sympathetic understanding in the presence of recorded cannibalism and horrendous blood-letting in revenge on the part of the followers of Raymund of Toulouse, Tancred, Godfrey of Bouillon and other nobles who took the Cross at the behest of the Golden Pope, Urban II.

All this, of course, is as it should be, for it would be a mistake to recreate the mass movements of the late eleventh century in terms of a post-Darwinian world: the illusion would be gone, and the illusion is all that matters in any account of the crusades that pretends to drama. Other writers have made more of the pestilence and famine that raged in Germanic lands in the winters of 1094 and 1095—a state of affairs that evidently led many to accept joyfully the opportunity of escaping the restrictions imposed by the soil

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that was offered by Urban's plea for a holy movement to rescue the sepulchre of Christ. Other writers have pointed to the earth hunger of the Normans, who had by no means settled down in 1094. Mr. Lamb is aware of these not-so-holy motivations, but he is content to note them and to pass on. To him they are but part of a drama that was carried through in different, in other-worldly, terms.

Mr. Lamb tells his story admirably, with frequent recourse to the chronicles that have come down to us from the hands of the one known as "The Anonymous", from Raymund, the namesake and chaplain of the Count of Toulouse, and from the simple Fulcher of Chartres. Mr. Lamb's own passages flow with a marked evenness of spirit into the passages set down by the crusaders themselves. It is just the sort of book that would have delighted Henry Adams, for, where Adams merged himself with the spirit of Mariolatry, Mr. Lamb merges himself with the spirit of the men of God who partook of the valor of the knights. The opening chapters of Mr. Lamb's chronicle are masterly in their atmospheric evocation of the political and social and religious state of Western Europe at the close of the eleventh century. He christens it "the age of iron", an age "untaught, scarred by hidden lusts, unthinking", and "cruel beyond our conception", but an age, nevertheless, in which "men were already laboring at the stones that would build the great cathedrals". If, in the latter chapters, the sieges of Antioch, of Jerusalem, and so on, take on a sameness that defeats the drama, Mr. Lamb is justified in depressing the blood pressure of his narrative for the sake of the inclusiveness of his record.

Save for a note or two, and an afterword, the chronicle ends with the end of the first crusade; Richard the Lion-hearted and Saladin are to come later. It is with no perfunctory gesture that we say we shall look forward to the publication of Mr. Lamb's next book.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

PORTRAIT OF A CHINESE LADY *by Lady Hosie* (MORROW. $5.00)

It is a great pity that Lady Dorothea Hosie, in her *Portrait of a Chinese Lady*, allows her personal attitudes to saturate a book which is otherwise fascinating.

Having been born and educated in China, and having worked with her parents in many varied missionary capacities, she had the rare opportunity of knowing intimately the domestic life both of the rich and poor; from these she has taken some of her most interesting experiences and embodied them in this book. In particular, she is interested in the work of Chinese women, and portrays the desperate struggles and sacrifices which they are making in order that they, too, may discard ancient impeding customs, such as their systems of marriage and concubinage, and obtain freedom. Again, eager to appreciate the attitude of all classes to the recent invasion of Western ideas, she talks with professors, rickshawmen, Buddhists, lepers, servants and soldiers in all parts of China, and gives sympathetic accounts of them. Lady Hosie does not attempt a coherent story but, through incidents which pleased and interested her, and through the friendships which she made, she renders a vivid and sympathetic account of China today.

K. GWENDA DAVID

SEVEN MONTHS AND SEVEN DAYS *by Kaj Klitgaard* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $3.00)

STERNE, in *A Sentimental Journey*, wrote: "What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life, by him who interests his heart in everything, and who, having eyes to see what time and chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyeth on his way, misses nothing he can *fairly* lay his hands to". Mr. Klitgaard has laid his hand fairly to a lively store, scarcely any item of which fails to glow as if touched with the magic of some charmed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prince out of a Norse Edda. Realism which brings the very breath of far places, and a hard-headed scientific scepticism, here are coupled with an imagination to shame a teller of fairy-tales but, unlike some of our modern Irish-American writers, Mr. Klitgaard is careful to discriminate between fact and fancy. A robust and at times quite Rabelaisian humor informs his writing. To travel with him on the *S. S. St. Ursula* (on which he was second officer on a round-the-world cruise) is to see with eyes penetrating and kindly, sensitive to beauty and jestingly devastating to sham. Under a whimsical little drawing he made of a goldfish bowl, appears the phrase, *Dis donc, poisson d'or, tu as environné le globe.* It is but one of many scattered grace-notes.

The book owns points in common with Aldous Huxley's *Jesting Pilot* in its crisp phrase-making, and Arthur Warner's *A Landlubber's Log* in its devotion to clarity, yet it is compact of a certain gnomic wisdom common to neither.

R. P. HARRISS

HOT COUNTRIES *by Alec Waugh* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $3.50)

THIS is a record of wanderings in Tahiti, Martinique, Siam, Ceylon, the West Indies and Haiti—countries that have nothing in common except heat. Nor must the reader be disappointed if, after the perusal of this book, he finds that they have still nothing in common except heat. Mr. Waugh has not that singularity of observation which can unify into one movement the most diverse and apparently unrelated scenes and experiences. When he says, therefore, that his book is "a narrative of personal impressions" he is making an overstatement. What he has done is accurately to acquaint us beforehand with some of the scenes and impressions we may not be able to avoid, should we follow in his footsteps. His *personal* impressions—impressions, that is, which one *knows* could not have been made upon anyone else—are precisely three, and they were made by the ruins of St. Pierre, by the city of Sydney, and by the citadel of Christophe at Milhot.

But he is really at his best when he is most impersonal—when he is discussing the relations between brown women and white men, or comparing types of Englishmen in the tropics, or describing those surface emotions which are common to nine out of ten men when they travel. This is in itself no mean achievement, and *Hot Countries* is, in fact, a very good book of its kind—but a book that could only have been written by one whose imagination has apprehended its tropics from an immovable position in the temperate zones.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FLEDGLING FICTION

by Guy Holt

Once, years ago, there lived a lady who took in manuscripts for a living. She was frail and she was elderly but she had a dauntless spirit; and every day she spent the hours plodding through the manuscripts which many otherwise excellent persons had prepared for her discomfort. Always there was a look of hope in her eye, but it was rarely indeed that one saw her make her way toward the editor's office, some favored manuscript borne proudly before her, as she hummed the unrecognizable tune which at that time I took to be the chant of victory of all first readers.

"I have a recurrent dream," she once told me. "I am miraculously endowed with a seeing touch, so that I no longer have to struggle through reams of ineptitude. As I touch each manuscript its hidden worth becomes apparent to me, and I discern at once whatever of truth or tenderness or beauty it may contain. And then, of a sudden, I'm holding in my hands the best of them all. It is, of course, a first novel, but you'd never know that, for it bears the marks of all the cunning and profundity and sheer awe-inspiring loveliness that ever went to the making of a book. Knowing all this, do I rush to the editor shouting of my discovery? I do not. I sit down instead to read it carefully and quietly, my mind benumbed with the conviction that this is a masterpiece.

"That," she would say, "is a dream from which always I hate to awaken."

Some such illusion, I suspect, graces the sleep of many publishers, nor am I wholly certain that it does not invade their hours of waking. Certainly some hazel wand rather than sober judgment has dictated the publication of a fair minority of the books which find their way into the cigar stores and occasionally into success. But when this touchstone is applied to the work of new authors, particularly to first novels, then, indeed, reason is doubly flouted. For these, scepticism and indifference lie in wait and only luck and a vociferous ballyhoo can ever secure for the beginning novelist more than faint praise or a handful of readers. One would think that here at least the incorrigible optimism of those who gamble with printed words would be hobbled and wariness given its head. But is it? I, who in my time have hazel-wanded through acres of first novel manuscripts, can with a good grace admit that such has not always been the case. May I be forgiven then if I survey the current crop of new novelists with more of discretion than charity?

Yet, of the ten first novels that have come to my hand during the past month a number provide very excellent reading. At least four of them stay agreeably in the mind long after they have been read; at least four are well imagined and well contrived and give evidence that here are writers for whom the making of a novel is a lesson not learned by rote. Of these, the best, to my thinking, is

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Constance Savery's *Tenthragon* (King. $2.00), one of the books with which Alfred H. King makes his bow as a publisher. This is the story of Patrick Tenthragon, who as a boy of seven returns from the house which has fostered him almost since infancy to his ancestral home and the guardianship of his Uncle Brendon, a grave young man of twenty-eight. There are hints of a past turbulence in the lives of these Tenthragons, even of something more sinister; and their home, Thragoness, is a fit setting for whatever dark happenings may have occurred there. It stands, bleak and forbidding, on a hill, presenting two faces to the world—for Thragoness is really two houses, two wholly separate establishments. Of the one the boy Paddy is made free; the other he knows only as a mysterious place whence comes inexplicable laughter at times, and at times a music which to his fancy-quickened ear seems of unearthly beauty. But the doors which lead to this other Thragoness are locked, and into it he is forbidden to enter.

All this is presented with quiet simplicity, with no attempt at sensational effect; if melodrama is in the offing it will come of its own force and not through any urging from the author. Melodrama does come, but it is of a surprising kind. For this forbidden habitation, into which the boy stumbles, conceals only another Tenthragon—a spiritually maimed and physically tormented youth who seizes upon the child as a fit vehicle for an irrational vengeance of his own. Here Miss Savery is at her best, and that best is very good indeed. For Paddy, entered upon a career of disobedience and numerous consequent deceits, enlarges his experience into the dimension of terror. Even the end, too patently contrived as an escape from a tragic impasse, does not detract from the effectiveness or the credibility of the tale. The mind, captured by the skilled evocation of a mood, is content to ignore this irrelevant invention and stay in enforced contemplation of a child's bewitchment.

Less evocative but no less sensitive in its perceptions is the series of glimpses of Ella Breer which Elizabeth Wilkins Thomas has threaded into her novel *Ella* (Viking. $2.50). There is a quietude, a gracious fluency to Miss Thomas's prose which charms the eye; but the book as a whole is disconcerting, even monotonous. Ella should emerge from its pages a realized person, but she does not. We meet her at a dozen stages of her early life: from her fifth birthday to young womanhood. We are told what she sees, what she experiences, even what she feels; but she herself remains distant, a vague, a faintly appealing apparition. This failure to communicate life or meaning to her principal, almost her only, character is a prime defect in a book which is enlivened with moments of genuine beauty.

Quietude is the dominant quality in Dorothy Edwards's first novel (although not her first book), *Winter Sonata* (Dutton. $2.00). The musical implication of the title is apt; for the author is concerned not with the story but with the thematic interplay of a few characters. They become curiously real, these people to whom so little happens: Mr. Nettle, with his shyness and physical fragility; the Neran sisters, moving through a strain of sombre, muted beauty; George Curle uttering ponderous banalities; Mr. Premiss with his quick flirtatious laughter and quicker silence; and the outlawed gaiety that is Pauline Clark—they meet and swell and intermingle, then die away to silence. Nothing has occurred, but even that nothing is at an end; there has been only a little period of beguilement, a display of virtuosity, no more.

All this is dissatisfying, of course, not because the author has failed of her intent, but because the intent itself is not enough. Half-lives and half-emotions are not rich enough material, the skilful arrangement of patterns too unambitious a task for a talent as considerable as Miss Edwards displays. Something meaningful has been left out of her

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pages: some quickening event, some illuminating concept which would have made of the book a small masterpiece.

If all three of these young women novelists have been content to write of small deeds in a quiet world, Miss L. M. Mabie's ambition is of sterner stuff. In a book that is riotous with bloodshed she tells the story of Louis XI, and has done an excellent job of it. There are times in *The Saints, the Devil and the King* (Bobbs-Merrill. $2.50), when her own thorough familiarity with her chief character has blinded her to the need of a more explicit exposition—the beginning of the book is flagrantly misty—but she has managed to impart life and verisimilitude to a character as incredible as any that ever lived, and this without leaning heavily upon history for corroboration. A good book this, with much really excellent writing in it. Let the author develop her undeniable gift as a storyteller and her books will be worth heeding.

The Sword Falls by Anthony Bertram (Harpers. $2.50), belongs to the good old (and perennial) school of sentimental characterization and actions—a school whose more adept practitioners have a low habit of stealing behind your intelligence to play upon your emotions. Mr. Bertram does this sort of thing well. He builds a plausible picture of the somewhat too waggish Mr. Albert Robinson, of his wife Victoria (called Dot, "after Dot Peerybingle in *The Cricket on the Hearth*") and their little home in the suburbs. There is far too much of the quaint in the account of their lives, of the slow period from the innocent nineties to the outbreak of the war, but much of this vanishes when the Robinsons are caught in the tragedy of the war itself, when disintegration overtakes the family group and chiefly when Albert offers himself as a hostage for his son's dishonor. Here is simple, honest action, still distorted by sentiment but with a dignity of its own and a very direct pull at the heart. The end, with its picture of the old clerk, defeated and alone, quietly resuming the dignified servitude that has always been his, is excellent.

The story of a ring of crooked politicians and the newspaper man who exposes them at any cost, *Scoop*, by James S. Hart and Garrett D. Byrnes (Little, Brown. $2.00), is another echo of an old tradition. It is only in the dialogue and in the love affair between the reporter hero and his sweetheart that the mark of the second quarter of the twentieth century becomes apparent, but the details of newspaper life are, as they always must be when vividly reported, fascinating; the story moves swiftly to a dramatic end.

Neither a yarn nor good is *This Man and This Woman* (Liveright. $2.50). Donald Stauffer, the author, has been at some pains in the early chapters to describe the adventures of Francis Carden, a belletrist of sorts, as one of the crew of a Gloucester fishing smack—a trip which ends in murder of which Francis is a solitary and mute witness. But when the author enters upon his main theme he is at sea indeed. He has aimed to write of a wife's jealousy of her husband's work, but he succeeds only in presenting a series of discordant scenes, which, although earnest, are nevertheless inept. There is something singularly wearisome about unhappy marriage as a theme when it is unsupported by a profound grasp of character.

Being anonymous, *Ex-Mistress* (Brentano. $2.00), cannot with certainty be called a first novel, but internal evidence will justify its inclusion in this department. There is little to be said in its favor, for its manner is inferior to its morals. Dora Macy (if by chance she is a real person) may have been a bad, bad woman, but assuredly she was never, in Fanny Brice's immortal phrase, "awful good company".

And I have nothing good to say of Fanny Lee Weyant's *The Tethered Bubble* (Century. $2.50). It may be, as the publishers say, "a tender throbbing novel". It is also—to me—unreadable.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE BOOKMAN'S MONTHLY SCORE

COMPILED BY FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE, LIFE MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, IN COÖPERATION WITH THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF AMERICA

This month's score is more noteworthy for the shifting in relative positions of books which have previously been named in these lists than for newcomers to the record. Young Mr. Halliburton, who held top place in the list for a year or two with one of his previous books, is up there again while young Herr Remarque continues to stand head and shoulders above all the other fictionists. The one real surprise of the month is the disappearance of Mr. Dakin's book on Mrs. Eddy. One wonders how much this is due to lack of reader interest and how much to the famous Committee on Publication.

—F. P. S.

NOVELS

1. ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT	*Erich Maria Remarque*	LITTLE, BROWN
2. WHITEOAKS OF JALNA	*Mazo de la Roche*	LITTLE, BROWN
3. A FAREWELL TO ARMS	*Ernest Hemingway*	SCRIBNER'S
4. HUDSON RIVER BRACKETED	*Edith Wharton*	APPLETON
5. ROPER'S ROW	*Warwick Deeping*	KNOPF
6. THE GALAXY	*Susan Ertz*	APPLETON
7. THEY STOOPED TO FOLLY	*Ellen Glasgow*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
8. BURNING BEAUTY	*Temple Bailey*	PENN
9. SCARLET SISTER MARY	*Julia Peterkin*	BOBBS-MERRILL
10. GOD HAVE MERCY ON US *	*William T. Scanlon*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
11. THE GOOD COMPANIONS *	*J. B. Priestley*	HARPERS
12. A LANTERN IN HER HAND	*Bess Streeter Aldrich*	APPLETON

GENERAL

1. NEW WORLDS TO CONQUER	*Richard Halliburton*	BOBBS-MERRILL
2. HENRY THE EIGHTH	*Francis Hackett*	LIVERIGHT
3. THE ART OF THINKING	*Ernest Dimnet*	SIMON & SCHUSTER
4. A PREFACE TO MORALS	*Walter Lippmann*	MACMILLAN
5. THE TRAGIC ERA	*Claude G. Bowers*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
6. MARRIAGE AND MORALS	*Bertrand Russell*	LIVERIGHT
7. THE UNIVERSE AROUND US *	*Sir James Jeans*	MACMILLAN
8. THE MANSIONS OF PHILOSOPHY	*Will Durant*	SIMON & SCHUSTER
9. GRANDMOTHER BROWN'S HUNDRED YEARS	*Harriet Connor Brown*	LITTLE, BROWN
10. JOURNEY'S END	*R. C. Sherriff*	BRENTANO
11. STRANGE INTERLUDE	*Eugene O'Neill*	LIVERIGHT
12. JULY '14	*Emil Ludwig*	PUTNAM

* *This title has not previously appeared in the Monthly Score.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED